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SERMONS

ON THE

DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE YEAR.

WITHDRAWN

BY THE

REV. FATHER FRANCIS HUNOLT,

Priest of the Society of Jesus, and Preacher in the Cathedral of Treves.

TRANSLATED BY THE

REV. J. ALLEN, D.D.

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ON THE

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL.

FIRST SERMON.

THE TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC RELIGION.

Subject.

The Christian Church is founded on Peter and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, and that in such a manner that nothing can overcome her; therefore she must necessarily be founded by God, and cannot be false.—*Preached on the Feast of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul.*

Text.

Super hanc Petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam et portæ infere non prævalebunt adversus eam.—Matth. xvi. 18.

"Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Introduction.

Is Peter, then, he on whom the Church of Christ is built? Are Paul and the other Apostles those who have spread the Church throughout the whole world and established her so firmly that no power, not even the gates of hell, can prevail against her? This is a matter, dear brethren, that deserves our greatest admiration; it is one which, in itself alone, if we had no other proofs, would show the infallible truth of our Christian religion, and would convince any one that this religion can come only from God; it is a matter which is in itself sufficient to convince and to confound all unbelievers, who either do not believe in the Church, or who have separated from her, or who live as if they really had

no faith at all. Since there are, alas! many of the latter class even amongst Catholics, in our days, I shall now try to develop these ideas a little more fully. Therefore we shall take as our

Plan of Discourse.

That, since the Catholic Church is founded on Peter, and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, in such a way that nothing can overcome her, she must necessarily be founded by God, and cannot be false.

This will form the matter of my sermon of to-day, to the consolation of all true Catholics, and to the shame and fear of all apostates, and of all those who, though still in the Church, are only Christians in name. Do Thou, O Jesus, strengthen us in Thy faith, which, through Thine Apostles, Thou hast so wonderfully begun, perfected and continued: this we ask of Thee through the intercession of Thy blessed Mother Mary and of the holy angel guardians of Thy Church.

The spread of Christianity thro' the whole world is the greatest miracle when we consider all the circumstances.

I begin the discourse of to-day, in which sound reason alone shall be our guide, with what St. Augustine says on this subject; the Christian religion was begun and spread throughout the world by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, with real miracles, or no such miracles were necessary. If miracles really helped to found the Church, as is in truth the case, then God must of necessity be their author, for He alone is the Almighty God who has nature in His power, who can set bounds to her and work against and beyond her strength, and perform real miracles; consequently this religion cannot be erroneous or false, for God cannot approve of and confirm falsehood by miracles wrought either by Himself or by others; otherwise He would not be an all-true and perfect God, but one who could and would deceive and betray. Did the Apostles work no miracles in founding the Church? Then that is the greatest miracle of all; for who could imagine that such a work could be accomplished by such men, in such a manner, and with such effect, with such fortunate, permanent and complete success, if a higher, supernatural and heavenly strength had not helped in the work? We shall now consider these circumstances in order.

For this religion was quite new, different

First: what sort of a work was it that was about to be commenced? A religion and faith had to be founded and introduced over the whole world into all kingdoms and countries,

according to the command of Our Lord to His disciples. "Go forth into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creatures." [1] Not a single nation was to be excluded. "Teach all nations," [2] an entirely new religion of which the world had hitherto known nothing. A religion which brooks no rival, and which alone is necessary to salvation: "He who shall not believe, shall be condemned." [3] A religion whose mysteries are completely opposed to all other religions then known in the world; and to introduce those mysteries, it was necessary to overthrow so much idolatry, so many forms of belief, nay, even Judaism itself, to confound all worldly wisdom and convict it of ignorance, gross error, and falsehood, to confront all human power and the rage and anger of kings and emperors and to conquer all by the force of truth, and to root out the ancient manners and customs of all peoples and nations in which they were born, which they had inherited from their forefathers, and to cause them to be abandoned at once and forever. Only think, my dear brethren, what trouble it costs, what disquiet and opposition it occasions, to deprive, I will not say a town, but even a village, of an ancient right or custom, no matter how small the thing is, or how unimportant: so hard is it to depart from an old custom, or to give up what we think we have a right to. And yet, that had to happen amongst all the peoples of the world, who had to be completely changed and converted, as far as their ideas and morals were concerned. And it all really happened. Just as in the beginning, a single word of God created the world. As the Prophet says: "He spoke and it was done;" [4] so, also, says St. Augustine, when the world knew nothing of the Christian faith, that faith was announced: "He ordered it to be announced and it was received;" [5] the world accepted it and men gave up their old usages to conform to this faith.

from all others, and could alone be true.

A faith which appears to go against all reason and which seemed utterly unintelligible to the worldly wise of the time; a faith which teaches, for instance, that there is one God and that in Him there are three distinct persons. How can that be? who can believe it? If there is only one God, how can there be three to constitute Him? If there are three distinct persons, how can there be only one God? A faith which believes in one who is God and man at the same time, so that it can be said with truth,

This religion seems opposed to all human reason.

[1] Euntes in mundum universum, prædicate Evangelium omni creaturæ.—Mark xvi.
[2] Docete omnes gentes. [3] Qui vero non crediderit condemnabitur.
[4] Dixit et facta sunt. [5] Jussit, et creditum est.

God is man and man is God; a man is Almighty, Eternal, Immortal; God is born in time, he grew up and died as man; who can understand that? God is immortal, how then can He be a man who died? That man is subject to weakness, change, and the miseries of this life; how can he be God, who is unchangeable, impassible, all-perfect, and happy? Yet people, even the most learned and the wisest, were to be convinced of this seemingly strange truth, and to such an extent as to be ready to give up all they possessed, even their life's blood, for the sake of it. And that really happened: He ordered them to announce the faith and it was received. [1]

Even unbecoming a man of honor.

A faith which appeared opposed, not only to reason, but even to honor (which is so precious in the eyes of the world, that it is valued more than life itself); which was branded with a mark of infamy, inasmuch as its author (as was also necessary to be believed) was publicly seized by the authorities, tried in various tribunals, condemned as a malefactor and crucified. What a stumbling-block for the Gentiles! What an opportunity, and an apparently justifiable reason were thus offered for saying (as was really often said) that christianity was the religion of the wicked and a cesspool of vice, since its teacher and author suffered the shameful death of a thief or murderer! Yet the world has believed. "Behold," says St. John Chrysostom, full of astonishment, "behold a wonderful faith; after the crucifixion of its Author, the world received the faith," [2] and adored the crucified man. We wonder at the blindness of the heathens, how they can deify men and pay them divine worship; yet they did that to those who had been great kings, on account of their power, wisdom, and glory; it was a species of flattery not unknown in the political world, in which the creature is often preferred to the Creator, through human respect, self-interest, or blind love; but, to adore a man after having scourged Him and nailed Him to a tree, that is a thing that, naturally speaking, no reasonable man could bring himself to do. Nevertheless, "after the crucifixion the world believed and received the faith." That a crowd of people should run after Christ when He changed water into wine, or multiplied the loaves, or healed the sick, the dumb, and the blind, or raised the dead, there was nothing in that to do violence to sound reason; but that so many people should follow Christ after His mis-

[1] Jussit, et creditum est. [2] Post crucem orbis ad fidem accessit.

erable death on the cross, that is what the human mind cannot grasp.

If, at least, this religion had prepared something agreeable and pleasing, something to appeal to human sensuality and to natural desires; or, if God had created for the purpose a new race of people, free from all bad inclinations, then this wonderful work might have been explained, and would have ceased to be so wonderful; just as it is not a matter for great astonishment that before Christ heathenism, and after His time, Mahommedanism gained such influence in Asia and Africa, or that, in later times, Luther, Calvin and other heresiarchs had so many followers in Germany, England, France and other places; there is nothing, I say, wonderful in this: the wonder is, rather, that all the kingdoms of the world did not follow suit. And why? Because some adored gods from whom they had little to fear, and who were favorable to carnal desires and all sorts of vices; others gave free rein to their passions, and others again were satisfied with a general sort of faith and confidence in Christ and His merits, while they looked upon good works as unnecessary; they put aside everything that is disagreeable and difficult, so that what remains does not interfere with our sensual and natural desires, and our own daily experience tells us what a mighty influence these latter have on the human heart. But the real Christian religion, which had to be introduced in those days, was a law severe and strict and opposed to all sensuality; it inculcated the necessity of temperance, fasting, self-denial, and mortification; it called upon men to say, "Blessed are the poor."[1] What does that mean? Had not poverty been always considered as the greatest evil of life? It proclaimed, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution."[2] How could that be? Was not freedom always considered the greatest good, and oppression hated everywhere? It said, "Blessed are they who mourn."[3] What a wretched happiness! Is it not better to laugh than to weep, to be merry than to be sad? What sort of a law is that which says to the proud that they must be humble and become like little children; to the avaricious, that they must detach their hearts from earthly goods, and look upon riches as dust? What sort of a law is it that tells the sensual man to mortify his flesh with its desires, to take up his cross daily and follow Christ; that commands a vindictive, injured, and angry man to pardon his enemy

A religion, difficult and opposed to sensuality.

[1] Beati pauperes.—Matth. v. [2] Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur. [3] Beati, qui lugent.

and love him, to do good to those who hate him, to pray for those who persecute him, and so on, as the Christian law prescribes? What think you now, my dear brethren; is that a work which a human, or merely natural strength is capable of accomplishing?

In our own days we can hardly preach those truths to Catholics. And yet they were formerly accepted by Jews and heathens.

Alas! even in our own times, to preach the same truths to a Christian congregation, to teach the young to avoid occasions of sin, to watch over their senses, to be reserved and modest; to exhort the rich to give alms, these to be temperate, those to be humble, and all to be concerned in their salvation, is not that often a fruitless and profitless labor? Yet, those things are preached to people who make profession of the true Christian religion, of its laws and chief doctrines. And what great result could we not hope for in their case, since the same truths had to be preached in the synagogues of the Jews, in the temples of the heathens, in the courts of kings and emperors, who had never before heard anything of that law, and were accustomed to quite the contrary, who were brought up in pride, avarice, lust, vindictiveness, intemperance and other vices? For my part, it seems that this work presents an insuperable difficulty, nay, even an impossibility to be accomplished; or, if a religion that, apparently, opposes all natural reason, honor, and inclination, finds credence amongst men, then, some supernatural Being must have had to do with it, for such a result could never have been brought about, unless by the strong arm of the Almighty God. Therefore, this law was received and spread throughout the world. [1]

It would seem impossible, to all human reason, before its accomplishment.

Let us consider a few other circumstances. What sort of people were they, in God's name, who began and accomplished that work? Imagine, it is again St. Augustine who speaks, that you are back again in the old heathen times, that you have before you a Plato, who was then a miracle of wisdom, or a Socrates, who was then called the master and teacher of moral virtues; tell one of them that the world is about to be improved, a new faith and religious law to be established, which all kingdoms and people must accept, and a new kind of life to be introduced; describe to him the religion and life that we have just been considering; ask him to advise you how to make a good beginning of the work, so that it may succeed. What would he think: what answer would he make to your question? Would he not

[1] Creditum est.

say that you had lost your senses, that you were a dreamer, a fool? I—Plato would answer—I have shown how man can live in the greatest possible happiness, I have demonstrated it in the clearest manner; and what have I gained thereby? There is not a single town that I have been able to persuade to live according to my idea. And Socrates would say, I tried to speak of the falsehood of the heathen gods, and the attempt cost me my life; and now you wish to introduce a new religion, and such a religion as you have described, which all people of the world must approve of and believe in? Have you lost your senses? Are you not building castles in the air? Are not these the ravings of a disordered imagination? But if one of those dead came to life again, without knowing anything of what has happened in the world since his time, and if you were to show him how that work prospered with all the circumstances before described, how this religion is spread over the whole world, how there is, at the present moment, no single form of belief that is so general and so respected, as this; how it is received by great and small, without distinction; by the experienced and the inexperienced, by emperors and peasants, by savages and statesmen; could he ever imagine that to be the case, if he did not see it with his own eyes? Would he not be astonished at such a work?

And this work was accomplished principally by twelve men.

Are they gods, he would say, or men, who have done this? They were men, you would answer, their chief was called Peter, the others were named Paul, Andrew, John, &c., twelve in all. What! twelve men to renew the whole earth? What could twelve men do in a single kingdom; in one country, nay, even in a single town? How could they then suffice for all the peoples and nations of the earth? Nevertheless, they were twelve in number who undertook this work; they separated from each other, one went here, another there; they went north, south, east, and west, from one kingdom to another, from one town to another; they presented themselves almost alone before the people, and preached their doctrine to them: "But they went forth and preached everywhere." [1] And by the help they received they brought matters so far, that in their own life-time, their religion was planted everywhere in the world.

Who had neither authority, money, nor power, nor learning,

But, at least, they must have been twelve powerful kings, he would say, who could frighten people with their glory and power, or bribe them with their money and riches, or compel

[1] Illi autem profecti : prædicaverunt ubique.

and were hated and persecuted everywhere.

them by force of arms, or enchant them by their wonderful wisdom and oratory? Twelve mighty kings indeed! They were twelve poor men, mostly fishermen, as ecclesiastical and profane tradition tells us, who owned not a finger's breadth of land; who travelled about barefoot, without scrip or staff, as their Master told them;[1] who carried all their property on their persons, suffered from hunger sometimes, so that they were glad to have a few ears of corn to eat, lived constantly on alms, and left poverty behind them as their only legacy; whom could they have bribed? Their learning and knowledge, as far as worldly matters were concerned, consisted in knowing how to make nets, and to catch fish; they had learned nothing else. From this you may see that they could have had very little authority, either from their own persons, or from their lowly descent, or from the person of their Master; for He, who sent them forth, was looked upon as a malefactor by the world, and was therefore put to death. And what could these twelve contemptible men do, by force of arms, against the whole world? Peter, indeed, once had a sword. but he, and all the others as well, were forbidden by their Master to make use of it. On the contrary, wherever they came, they found everything against them; as their Master told them, they went like sheep among ravening wolves; they were banished from one town to another and driven away, they were dragged before the tribunals, imprisoned and scourged publicly; he who could deliver them up, living or dead, thought he was doing a service to God. And are these the people who accomplished such a work, in such a manner? Yes, these poor, ignorant, lowly, and weak fishermen have accomplished that work; they have made kings and judges tremble, they have brought the world over to their conviction and faith. But how can that be? They were everywhere hated and persecuted and yet they carried out their design. Yes, that is what excites my astonishment, that is what St. Jerome could not understand. He says, "The Master is crucified, his disciples are in chains, and yet their religion increases daily." [2] It is this which convinces us all that such a work must come from a supernatural power.

They began the work in the most celebrated cities of the

One question more, says the worldly-wise philosopher: where did they first begin to preach their doctrine? They must have been simple, stupid people who first believed in them. And you

[1] Nolite portare sacculum neque peram.—Luke x.

[2] Magister suspensus et servi vincti sunt, et quotidie religio crescit.

will answer, they began in Jerusalem itself, in the very city where Christ, their Master, was crucified, where His name was still in odium in that city in which a number of people, from all nations under the sun, were at the time assembled.[1] There were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judæa, Cappadocia, Pontos, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphilia, Ægypt, Lybia, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia, as history tells us; and it was in this little world that they began to preach the new Christian law. Let us dwell a little longer, my dear brethren, on this circumstance. I imagine that I see these twelve poor men rushing out into the streets on Pentecost day, from the room in which they had hidden themselves through fear. Where are you going to? I ask them; and they answer, we are going to announce to all the people that He whom they crucified is their God, that they must adore Him, submit to His law, be baptized and give up their ancient faith as well. But, my good people, what idea possesses you? You will have the same reward that your Master received on the cross. And yet, a little while after, hardly has Peter opened his mouth, when I see with astonishment the people throw themselves in crowds at his feet, weeping and doing penance, and that three thousand of them are baptized, on that very day. After that, I see the Apostles going to the greatest city of the world. Peter, I ask, where are you going? I am going to Rome to the Capitol, to the governors and rulers of the world, to the courts of kings and emperors. And what will you do there? I will tell them that they must pull down their false gods, that their religion is a false, devilish, and impious superstition, and that they shall adore the crucified Jesus as the true God. And Paul, where are you going? To the Senate-house at Athens, to the schools of the worldly-wise, to preach the same doctrine. But what a fruitless undertaking that will be! And yet, I learn that their words have produced fruit; a few years later I see the cross glitter on the crowns of emperors and kings, the idols trampled under foot by the common people, the city of Rome, formerly the centre of all kinds of idolatry, become the head of the Christian religion, and all countries of the world full of Christians. They believed, although they were hunted down everywhere, condemned to wheel and sword, crucified, thrown to lions and tigers, cut down in thousands, flayed, and roasted alive, and exposed to every imaginable kind of cruelty; yet "they believed,"[2] nevertheless, "the faith

world and carried it out successfully in spite of persecution.

[1] Ex omni natione, quæ sub cœlo est. [2] Creditum est.

was spread abroad." Tertullian says, reproaching the heathens: The Christians were imprisoned and tortured and by that very means their numbers increased. [1] Ye tyrants may do what ye will! Threaten them, tell them not to embrace the Christian faith, and that faith will be spread all the more quickly. Scorch, burn and butcher as much as you will, in the place of one murdered Christian you will find two thousand ready to die; their blood is nothing but the seed from which they grow up abundantly. Such is the result of the great work which the twelve fishermen began. It is believed in everywhere, believed in constantly, believed in up to the present moment, while other sects cannot last over a century or two. And it is believed in so strongly, that they who do not live up to their faith, are secretly ashamed of themselves, and try to keep their transgressions private, while they esteem and admire those who observe it strictly.

Therefore this work can have no other than God for its Author, and therefore it must be the true religion.

And now I challenge all who have the use of right reason, and I ask them, if any one, after having considered all these circumstances, can ever imagine that the beginning, progress, spread, and duration of such a religion can be a mere natural work, if it can come from any one but the Almighty God Himself? For my part, I can say to God, with Richard of St. Victor: "Lord! if there is an error in what we believe, we are deceived by Thee, because this religion is endowed with wondrous signs that can come only from Thee." [2] If this religion is founded by Thee, it cannot be false, it must be that Church of which Thou hast said that no power nor the gates of hell shall ever prevail against it, and therefore, it has remained constant to the truth in which it commenced; it could not admit error, for otherwise it would be overthrown in an instant; if it could not admit error, it never required reformation or improvement, so that it is true and must remain true; consequently, all those who have abandoned that religion, or who embrace another form of belief, are not in the true Christian Church, which alone can lead to eternal happiness.

Pious Christians have reason to rejoice.

But, why have I undertaken this unnecessary labor, you will probably think, my dear brethren; what good is it to us, what profit are we to draw from it, why do you speak so to us? Do you think that we have perjured ourselves, or that we are waver-

[1] Incarcerabantur, torquebantur et multiplicantur.

[2] Domine. si error est. quem credimus, a te decepti sumus! quoniam iis signis prædita est illa religio, quæ non, nisi a te, esse potuerunt.

ing in the Catholic faith, since you make such efforts to convince us of its truth ? You might preach your sermon in Turkey, or in Japan, amongst heathens, or at least amongst heretics ; it would suit them much better. We are all good Christians here, praise be to God ! We believe in the old, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith, and we have never doubted of its truth. It is all true, my dear brethren, and you must forgive me, I have not considered the matter enough ; and it seems to me that I forgot, at first, that I am here in a Christian town, amongst Catholics, and actually in the town of Treves, in which so many countless thousands have given up life and property for the Christian faith, and you are their descendants, therefore let what I have said go for what it is worth, and let us be, at least, more strengthened and encouraged in this true faith of ours; let us console ourselves, be glad and rejoice in our hearts, and thank God unceasingly for so great a benefit, by which He has made choice of us before so many others, to be born and brought up in this one true religion which alone can bring us to eternal happiness. It seems to me that I hear a countless multitude of reprobate heathens and heretics howling and crying out from the depth of hell : " Why had we not this grace also ! what would we not have done for our God ! how carefully would we not have worked out our salvation !" And meanwhile I think to myself : I have received this grace, and how often have I lived hitherto according to the laws of my Christian faith ?

The impious must feel a heartfelt shame.

Yet, what am I thinking about ? On reconsidering the matter, my dear brethren, I must say that my subject is not unsuited, or out of place ; it is perhaps only too well adapted to some. Although all of you are Christians and Catholics, although all are convinced of the truth of our religion, yet all do not, so to say, believe in its truth : for what proof do we give that we live according to the truths of our religion ? How do our works agree with our faith ? We believe and profess one thing, we do and practise another; we are and profess to be Christians, and yet we often live in vice of all kinds, just as if we were the worst of heathens. What do I say ! if we really were heathens and knew nothing of the Christian law, it would be no great wonder if, carried away by our wicked nature and evil inclinations, we cared for nothing but satisfying the lusts and desires of the flesh. But to profess and acknowledge such a religion, whose laws are so holy, and at the same time, to show nothing of its holiness in our manners and actions ; a holiness which makes humility the foun-

dation of the Christian life, while we do not wish to hear of humiliations; a holiness which tells us to take up our cross and bear it patiently after Christ, while we fear the cross as we do the foul fiend; a holiness which commands us to live in meekness, unity, and love with one another, as brethren and children of the one Father, while we live in bitterness, hatred and enmity with each other, and refuse to tolerate the least injury; a holiness which tells us to keep our bodies pure and holy, while we dishonor them by foul passions; which tells us to begin and end everything in the name of Jesus, and our mouths and hearts are full of oaths and curses; that is, indeed, subject for the greatest wonder, for instead of living according to the truths of our faith, we rather trample them under foot like the heathens.

Of whom the Church complains.

Let us hear how St. Augustine represents the Christian Church as complaining of those who are Christians in name only: "Alas! my children," says this mother, "how many persecutions have I not suffered in the first years of my existence! Yet they have not been able to overcome me;[1] I have always been victorious; tyrants have taken the lives of my children, but they could not take away their hearts from me: their limbs were cut in pieces, their bodies were burnt, yet all that could not induce them to stretch forth their hands and offer incense to false gods. Those were days of combat and repeated victories; but now, in times of peace, when there are no tyrants, nor executioners, no rack, no torture, what condition am I in, O Christians! and where are ye, oh, true-hearted Christians! How many there are who profess to be my children, and who in reality persecute and harrass me with their works? How many there are who require very little threatening or punishment to induce them to give themselves up body and soul to creatures? Nay, even a slight pleasure or trivial gain can lead them to that act of treachery. How often have I suffered." I repeat it; all the persecutions I suffered in my youth, all that heresies have caused me to suffer since, have not prevailed against me; but the enemies that I now have to contend with I nourish in my own house, and the more they appear to be my friends, the more dangerous they are.

Conclusion and resolution of amendment.

Ah, my dear brethren, my Christian brethren! let us at all events not give any reason for this complaint to be made against us; let us not depart from the sublime spirit of our religion. We are ready to believe its truths to the last moment of our lives, but

[1] Sæpe expugnaverunt me a juventute mea, etenim non potuerunt mihi.

our lives must harmonize with the laws of our faith ; otherwise, what can we expect from the religion that is given to us, but which we dishonor? Alas! what excuse can I offer, when Thou, O God! reproachest me, because the faith that the idolatry and heathenism of the most cruel monsters could not overcome, has not been able to destroy the false maxims of the vain world in me, or to root up those evil habits that have taken possession of me? How shall I defend myself when Thou wilt prove to me that the faith which overcame the pride of emperors by the humility of the cross, could not free my heart from vanity, pride, impure love, hatred and envy? What answer shall I make when Thou shalt say to me that the faith which renewed and improved the whole world by its holy law, could not reform or sanctify my sinful life? How shall I defend myself when Thou shalt reprove me, because the religion that made the most cruel tortures sweet and pleasant to so many martyrs, could not induce me to bear the least trial with patience? Alas! I shall find no excuse, unless I now begin to lead a Christian life. Let it be so, O Lord! so Thou comfort me by Thy grace, enliven and strengthen my faith that has hitherto been so weak, and that has lost its energy and life through a want of good works; so that I may henceforth live in and by this vigorous, active faith, and thus gain eternal life. Amen.

Another Introduction of the Same Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost :

Text.

Ex hoc jam eris homines capiens.—Luke v. 10.
From henceforth thou shalt catch men.

The bark of Peter, into which Jesus entered to teach the people, was, according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers and other writers, a figure and symbol of the Catholic Church, in which Peter as chief steward of Jesus Christ, and his successors, the Popes of Rome, were to have the chief authority. The miraculous draught in which Peter, having launched his nets at the order of Christ, caught a countless multitude of fish at one haul, is a symbol of the preaching of the Gospel, by which Peter and the other Apostles, sent for the purpose by Christ, spread the Christian religion throughout the world, caught a countless multitude of people of every nation and brought them into the true Church. A circumstance, my dear brethren, which merits our

greatest admiration, &c., &c., *continues as before in the Introduction*

Subject.

The Christian religion was introduced and spread throughout the world by Peter and the other Apostles, therefore it must necessarily be from God and cannot be false. This is the subject of my sermon to-day, &c.

SECOND SERMON.

ON THE GREAT BENEFIT OF THE DIVINE VOCATION TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

Subject.

The exceeding great benefit of our vocation to the Catholic Faith imposes upon us the duty of unceasing gratitude to God, who has given us that vocation.—*Preached on the 6th Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Ille testimonium perhibebit de me, et vos testimonium perhibebitis. —John xv. 26.

"He shall give testimony of me, and you shall give testimony."

Introduction.

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, shall give testimony of Jesus Christ that He is the Son of God, and the Apostles and Disciples shall also give the same testimony. This happened when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday, were dispersed throughout the world, announced the Gospel of Christ to all people, and converted numberless souls to the Christian faith. Oh, what a great grace for those souls who were formerly in the darkness of heathenism and infidelity! The same grace has fallen to our lot, my dear brethren, inasmuch as we are descended from Catholic forefathers, and born and brought up in the Catholic faith, in which we still persevere. Do we ever think of the benefit we have received? We are Catholic Christians, and yet perhaps we do not think once, in a whole year, that we are therefore under a special obligation to God; much less do we thank Him for it every day. This sermon is intended to put a stop to such injustice.

Plan of Discourse.

The exceeding great benefit of our vocation to the Catholic faith imposes upon us the duty of unceasing gratitude to God.

Such is the subject of the sermon. The end and object of it is to show how this gratitude may be rendered, in case we have been hitherto wanting therein. For this end, oh, God! we beg of Thee a new grace, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels.

The greatness of a benefit is measured, not only by the excellence and costliness of the gift in itself, but much more by its usefulness and necessity for a great end and object. Thus, gold is a precious thing in itself, but if you give a piece of gold to a hungry man, who is not in a position to buy anything with it, you have done very little to help him to attain his end; a piece of bread would be much more acceptable to him, for without it he would die of hunger. Now, we mortals, on this earth, have no higher end and object than that for which we are all created, the attainment of eternal happiness in Heaven; consequently, he who gives me something that is useful and helpful for that end, benefits me greatly, and places me under an obligation; but if that thing is not merely useful, but even necessary, then there is no greater favor that he could do me.

The greatness of a benefit is measured by its use and necessity for eternal life.

Such a favor, my dear brethren, is the vocation to the true Catholic faith; for in this alone can we be certain of being able to work out our salvation, and to gain the kingdom of Heaven. Without it we are certain of not being able to attain eternal happiness, or to perform the least supernaturally good work that will be pleasing to God and deserving of Heaven, according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." [1] Therefore, the true faith is not only useful and helpful to attain Heaven, but it is also an absolutely necessary means, the first foundation of our salvation, the first source of all the other good works that are useful for salvation. Without this we cannot do anything good or gain eternal happiness.

Such is the vocation to the true faith, which is absolutely necessary to eternal life.

Oh, most gracious God, without this, how could all the other benefits, numberless and precious as they are, that Thou hast bestowed upon me hitherto, how could they help or profit me? Thou hast created me instead of so many other creatures who still remain in their nothingness, and to Thine own image; Thou hast given me a reasoning and immortal soul, endowed with memory,

No other benefit would be of any good to us without this.

[1] Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.—Heb. xi. 6.

understanding, and will. Thou hast given me a living body with its five senses; and after having thus endowed me, Thou hast preserved me every moment for so many years in health and strength. What do I not owe Thee, oh, God! for these benefits? If I could give Thee, in return, my life and everything that is in me or outside of me, and if I gave Thee all these things anew at each moment, and sacrificed them to Thee, even then I should only be returning to Thee what belongs to Thee already. That I readily acknowledge. But what would it all help me, if I had not the true faith? I should live, certainly, but as an object of Thy displeasure, who could have no share in Thee for all eternity. Jesus Christ! Thou hast shed Thy blood for me, Thou hast suffered the bitter death of the cross for my sake and thereby freed me from hell. Oh, what a merciful and incomprehensible love! If I could die a hundred thousand million times for Thee, I could not make an adequate return for Thy love! But what could the benefit of such a redemption help me, if I had not the true faith and were thus unable to share in the merits of Thy Passion and Death so as to save my soul? Thou hast given me the value of Thy Blood in holy Baptism, when Thou hast received and adopted me as Thy child and heir, oh, my Sovereign Benefactor! What return shall I make Thee? But not even this would help me to salvation (if I fell into sin after having attained the use of reason), if I had not the true faith, and therefore could have no supernatural love for Thee, no repentance for my sins, and were incapable of performing a single work that might be pleasing in Thy sight. The same truth holds: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."[1] I should be, after all those benefits, in the number of those, "who will not believe, shall be condemned."[2] So that faith is the necessary foundation on which all the other benefits and gifts must be founded, and it must prepare the way so that they may be profitable to my salvation.

God has bestowed this benefit on us Catholics in preference to so many countless unbelievers.

See now, oh, Catholic Christian, and acknowledge the great debt of gratitude you owe your God. The good God has given you and me this great and necessary benefit, when He called us to the Catholic, and only true and saving faith. Do not imagine that this happened by chance, or by good luck, or that it is a general sort of thing to which you and I and all the faithful have a right. No such thing: "Faith is a gift of God,"[3] who

[1] Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.

[2] Qui vero non crediderit, condemnabitur.—Mark xvi. 16.

[3] Fides est donum Dei.

does not scatter His gifts and graces by chance, but dispenses them according to His own pleasure, when, where, how, and to whom He wills. Look around the world, in thought, for a moment, and after you have considered all the nations therein, you will be compelled to acknowledge the truth of what the Prophet David says: "He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgment He hath not manifested to them."[1] For, in the three parts of the world, Asia, Africa, and America, how many peoples and nations will you not find in the darkness of infidelity, heathenism, Mahommedanism, Judaism and idolatry, who will perhaps never come to the knowledge of the true faith? Think how unfortunate these people are, compared to you. Here and there amongst them you will find one who is naturally good, honest, upright, temperate, and honorable; but since he has not the true faith, the foundation of real virtue and holiness, you might well say to him, "You run well, but you are not on the right way."[2] Think what merits could you have above all these poor people, that the great gift of true faith was bestowed on you and not on them.

In preference to so many heretics.

Look around a little more, and consider the fourth part of the world, Europe, in which Christianity has the strongest footing; how many countries, provinces, and kingdoms will you not find groaning under the yoke of the heresies of Luther, Calvin, Jansenius and other teachers of error; and think, too, what have so many lords and ladies, citizens and peasants done, that the Lord God has allowed them to be bred and born in a country infected with error, where they suck in the poison of heresy with their mother's milk, and who are now in such a state that, if they obstinately persevere in it, they will be lost forever; for, as no one was saved in the deluge, says the Holy Martyr, St. Cyprian, so there is no salvation to be hoped for except in the bark of St. Peter, that is, the Holy Roman Catholic Church. "There is no salvation outside the Church,"[3] as the Council of Lateran says. Think that you, in preference to all those others, are in that bark of Peter, the only true Church. And why? Ah, my God! you must conclude, what a debt do I not owe Thee? If I do not acknowledge the greatness of this benefit, I am not worthy to enjoy it. And it is that, oh, most merciful God, that, when I think of it as I ought, oftenest excites my astonishment at the mercy Thou hast shown me, and compels me to ac-

[1] Non fecit taliter omni nationi et judicia sua non manifestavit eis.—Ps. cxlvii. 20.
[2] Bene curris, sed extra viam. [3] Extra Ecclesiam non est salus.

knowledge the great debt of love and gratitude that I owe Thee. Why am I called and not the others? Why are the others left out while I am called? I know well, oh, most just God, that Thou hast pity on all whom Thou hast created, that Thou art He "that enlightens every man that cometh into the world."[1] Since, as my faith teaches me, Thou hast an earnest wish and desire that all men should be saved, I am certain that Thou givest to all men, that have ever lived in the world, sufficient light to arrive, if they wish, at the knowledge of the true faith; and I am certain, too, that by some extraordinary ways and means (even if a miracle were necessary), Thou wilt bring to the true faith those who live according to the natural law, and who, though they may be heathens, lead a life free from sin. But how widely different is the manner in which Thy goodness deals with me, from that in which it deals with them!

We are bred and born in this faith.

Here, oh, Catholic Christians, I beg of you to give your full attention, in order to understand still clearer the greatness of this benefit. The Apostle St. Peter, writing to Christians who were converted to the true faith from heathenism and Judaism, calls them a people elected by God: "You are a chosen generation, a purchased people, ... that you may declare His virtues who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."[2] Certainly those people had good reason to declare the mercy of God. Now, my dear brethren, we cannot exactly say of ourselves that we have been called out of darkness to this light, for the faith was infused into us with the grace of holy Baptism, and we have more reason to say that we were born, without knowing anything about it, and brought up in the bosom of the true Church, than to say that we have been called to it. Is not that the truth? And what follows therefrom? It follows that we are placed under a far greater obligation to God for the benefit of the faith, than the heathens, Jews, and heretics who are called to it out of darkness. And this is the reason: if we had been born and brought up in America amongst the savage people there, or in Africa amongst the idolatrous heathens, or in Asia amongst the Turks and Jews, or in England, Holland, Sweden, or Denmark, amongst the heretics, what would then be the case? Without doubt, as we have seen already, the all-merciful God, who desires the salvation of all men, would not have failed to send

[1] Qui illuminat omnem hominem, venientem in hunc mundum.

[2] Vos genus electum....ut virtutes annuntietis ejus; qui vocavit vos de tenebris in admirabile lumen suum.—I. Pet. ii. 9.

us some rays of His light by which we, like converted Christians, might have come to know the truth of the Catholic faith ; but do you think we would have followed this grace and have immediately embraced the faith according to divine inspiration ? Alas ! what a difficulty there would have been in doing so. My opinion is that neither I nor you would have done it, but would have acted as they who are in the darkness of error have hitherto acted and still continue to act, although they are not without sufficient grace from God. How many heathens, Jews, and heretics are there not who acknowledge, and even openly, if they are questioned, that ours is the true faith, and yet they cannot make up their minds to embrace it, being prevented by one cause or another. One is prevented by selfishness, another by human respect, another by fear of his prince ; the greater number are kept back from a clear knowledge of the truth by the love of ease and freedom of life. I have known and questioned Lutherans and Calvinists, and they have acknowledged that they were fully persuaded of the truth of the Catholic religion, yet they remained as they were. "Why should I become a Catholic ?" said one ; "if I did so, I should get nothing from my parents." Another said, "I have a relation who intends making me his heir; if I changed my religion I should lose that hope." A third said : "If I had turned all my land into money, and had placed it in safety, I should not long hesitate." "What shall I live on," said the fourth. "What will my relatives think," says the fifth, and the sixth says, "I should lose my situation." And so on. I know of Calvinistic and Lutheran preachers who offered to become Catholics if they were supported with their wives and children. There is no use in urging on them the loss of Heaven and the eternal pains of hell ; that will not solve their difficulties. In spite of their better knowledge they remain in their false religion and lose their souls. Now, I ask you, once again, my dear brethren, if we were bred and born in such circumstances, should we have less difficulties than they ? Should we have more courage to overcome those difficulties and to embrace the true faith at once ? Alas ! I fear that at the very least, we should have found it hard and very hard, and that only a few of us would have succeeded. Praised and blessed, therefore, be the all-merciful God, who has not only brought us to the right way of salvation in a much gentler and milder manner, but also has forced us into it, without asking our consent, inasmuch as He has caused us to be born and brought up in a Catholic country,

under a Catholic sovereign, by Catholic parents, in the bosom of the true Church, in the only religion that can bring us to salvation ; in which, even if we did not otherwise desire it, we are compelled to live and to die, at least through human respect, by a fortunate necessity. Christians! do you not yet understand how much we owe to the good God for this special benefit ?

We live in this faith, as the Christian religion enjoys peace and tranquillity.

There is still another circumstance which brings out the greatness of this benefit, in a stronger light. We who are Catholics, and who have lived till now in the true faith, in what sort of times do we live ? In times when the Church can make public profession of her faith in peace and tranquillity. Go back in thought to those dangerous times when the Christian faith was persecuted by tyrants and pagan emperors, everywhere, with armed force, of which this city of Treves was witness. In what state were things then ? To profess the Catholic faith meant to be deprived of all one's goods, to be driven out of house and home, to be imprisoned, loaded with chains, derided and mocked, stretched on the rack, torn with iron hooks, burnt with torches, mangled with scourges, flayed alive, roasted, crucified, and put to death with all sorts of terrible tortures. What would you think if those times were to come back again ! Happy times, indeed, I must confess, were those of the early Christians, when hearts were so inflamed with the fire of divine charity, that they gladly and joyfully sacrificed property and life, and gave themselves up to all sorts of torments in defence of their faith. But would that be the case now, when charity has grown cold in most hearts, if each one of us were told, with the sword hanging over our heads, either to give up our faith, or to sacrifice our property and possessions, or our honor and respectability, or to deliver up our bodies to a martyr's death ? I must again say that God would still deserve, on account of His infinite majesty and the love He has shown us, that small token of love from us. To gain the eternal joys of Heaven, it would certainly be worth while to suffer all kinds of torments ; the beautiful crown of martyrdom is surely worth the price paid for it. Oh, would that I were so happy as to suffer martyrdom for the faith ! Thus we often think and speak, but it is a different thing actually to feel and experience. If our words were really put to the test, oh, how many would turn their backs and abandon the faith ! It is a fine thing to say that we could bear courageously the scorn and derision of a whole people, when we can hardly tolerate an angry word from our neighbor, when we seek revenge for the

least affront, when, through fear of ridicule, we cannot resolve to give up some worldly custom that is displeasing to God. It is a fine thing to say that we could give up all we have, when we are actually ready to curse and swear, and swear falsely too, for the sake of a little money, and to keep up feuds among brothers and sisters, year after year, for a bit of land. We may say that we are willing to suffer scourge, rack, wheel, and fire, and yet, the least inconvenience prevents us from coming to church, the least opposition troubles and casts us down. We boast of being ready to shed our blood, and to suffer the most painful death, when we are so easily led away by the least allurement, a flattering word, human respect or some new, worldly custom, to offend against our faith and against the law of God. No, my dear brethren, let us candidly and humbly confess, that God has conferred a great benefit on us by placing us peacefully and tranquilly in His Church, in which, without fear of persecution, we can enjoy the fruits of faith with all desirable security, and can work out our salvation without let or hindrance.

We are therefore, obliged to be grateful to God, yet the contrary happens.

And now, I appeal to your reason, Catholic Christians! God has called us to the true Church and to the one saving faith, and has called us in preference to so many millions, and has called in such a manner. He has hitherto kept us in that faith with such ease and comfort to ourselves, do we not owe Him something for that? Would it be too much, would it be even enough, if we were to thank Him heartily every day, morning and evening, for such a great benefit? Would it be too much, nay, would it be enough, if we fulfilled, out of gratitude, all the commands of our faith with the greatest punctuality, and led a holy life according to the teaching of our holy religion? But how is it, if we do not think of this benefit even once in the week or month; if we abuse it to break the commandments and to offend God and to dishonor such a holy religion by a bad life? What would we deserve to be called then? Seneca tells a story of a soldier of Philip, the king of Macedon, who having suffered shipwreck, was cast on shore half-dead, on the lands of a certain Macedonian. The Macedonian, through pity, took the poor man into his house, laid him on his bed, cared for him for thirty days, until he was fully restored to health, and finally gave him money to go home. The soldier, after having thanked his benefactor, promised to speak a good word for him to the king; but what did he do? In place of speaking the good word, he asked the king to give him the land of that Macedonian, who had treated him with so much courtesy and

kindness, and Philip, who loved the soldier very much, granted his request. The good Macedonian, thus plundered of his goods, bore the injustice in silence, but sent a letter privately to the king, stating what he had done for the shipwrecked soldier; whereupon Philip, justly enraged, restored the property to its lawful owner, and caused the soldier to have the words, "This is an ungrateful guest,"[1] branded on his shoulders with a hot iron. Catholic Christians! how many of us deserve to have those shameful words branded, not on the shoulders, but on the forehead, where we make the sign of the cross as a token of our Catholic Christianity! This is an ungrateful guest. This is he who, after the shipwreck of original sin, was thrown, spiritually dead, on the land of the living, who was recalled to life, in preference to so many others who are lost eternally, by a merciful God in the sacrament of Baptism, who was received into His house, into the bosom of the true Church, in which he has been brought up in the true faith and nourished with the Sacraments and the Word of God. And how has he acted with his best benefactor? In place of paying the debt of gratitude he owes Him, he has often risen up against Him, he has stained the purity of the faith by a sinful life, and dishonored the holiness of the Church to which he belongs. This is an ungrateful guest—what a disgraceful name!

The greater, therefore, our condemnation.

Woe to him who goes into eternity branded in that shameful manner! We can be quite certain, my dear brethren, that the greater our good fortune in being bred and born in the true faith, the greater will be our misery if we are damned in the same faith. We can hardly refrain from shedding tears of pity, when we think that so many nations of the world are lost through heresy and infidelity; but for a Catholic Christian to go to hell, while still belonging to that faith in which alone salvation can be found, out of which there is no salvation, in which no one is lost who does not wish to be lost, that is, indeed, a terrible thing! And yet it happens, and, alas! in so many cases; for faith is not enough, if we do not lead a holy life according to our faith. "What good is it," asks Peter Damian, "to believe as a Catholic, if one lives as a heathen?"[2] It will be far more tolerable in hell for one who has been a heathen, a Turk, a Jew, or a heretic, than for one who has been brought up a Catholic and yet has lost his soul; for the very fact of having received and enjoyed the light of faith will

[1] Hic ingratus hospes est.—Seneca de benef. l. 4, c. 37.

[2] Quid prodest, si quispiam catholice credat et gentiliter, vivat.

make eternal damnation still more terrible; there is no doubt of that. St. Macarius, as Boland writes, once asked a skull that he saw lying on the ground, who he had been and in what state was his soul, and the skull answered: I was a pagan priest and my soul is in hell. The saint asked whether he was in the deepest pit of hell. No, answered the other, but as deep as we heathens who knew not God are under the surface of the earth, so much deeper are Christians below us in hell, and so much more grievously are they tortured. And then he howled out: "Woe to the man who transgresses the commandments of God."[1]

Sorrow and resolution of amendment.

Oh, my Lord and my God! how will it be with me, who have so often deliberately transgressed Thy law? As Thy love and goodness to me have been so great, in causing me to be born and brought up in the fold of the true Church, great also, and abominable has my ingratitude hitherto been! I must acknowledge, when I think of my sins that I have committed in the full light of Thy faith, that there is no punishment, amongst the infidels in hell, too severe for my ingratitude. Yet, that very faith that I have contradicted by my life, teaches me that Thou, who art infinite mercy, dost not repel any sinner who returns to Thee. Look, therefore, upon my repentant and contrite heart, with which I now hate and execrate my former sins, and the many times I have dishonored my holy religion, and with which I now firmly resolve to live, for the future, as a worthy child of my dear Mother, the Catholic Church, and to direct my life according to her laws with the greatest exactness; and in this, along with daily acts of thanksgiving, shall consist my gratitude for the great grace of vocation to the true faith. I will believe as a Catholic, I will live and die as a Catholic, so that I may praise and glorify Thee forever, for the benefit Thou hast conferred upon me, with Thy triumphant Church in Heaven. Amen.

THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS, WHO ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Subject.

By the sanctifying grace that we Christians receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God. What a high dignity, what honor and glory for us poor mortals.—*Preached on Pentecost Sunday.*

[1] Væ homini illi, qui mandata Dei transgreditur.

Text.

Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit, et Pater meus diliget eum.—John xiv. 23.

"If any one love Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him."

Introduction.

By charity is understood, not merely the real inclination that we have towards God, when we awaken love to Him, but also, and chiefly, a constant love, or the state of sanctifying grace, which we receive in Baptism from the Holy Ghost, in virtue of which He makes His abode in our souls and remains there until He is driven out by mortal sin. Of each one, then, who so loves, that is, of each one who is in the state of grace, Christ says in the Gospel, "My Father will love him."[1] How will He love him? Here, Christians, I beg of you to give me your attention. It is a happiness, a dignity, the like of which is not on earth: it is an honor and glory of which we think very little, perhaps not at all, although we are raised to it: "My Father will love him," as His own child. And now, to our consolation and encouragement in the love and service of God, we shall consider this point.

Plan of Discourse.

By the sanctifying grace that we, Christians, receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God. What a great dignity, honor, and glory for us poor mortals!

That is the whole subject, from which a moral conclusion will be drawn. Come, Holy Ghost! open the eyes of our minds with Thy light, that we may know the dignity of the state to which we are raised by Thy grace; and that we may always labor to keep in that state with the greatest care, and by avoiding every sin. That is the favor we implore of Thee, through thy virginal spouse Mary and our holy angels guardian.

Human ambition has often striven for divine honors.

Men have inherited from nature such a great desire of honor and glory, that many raised their ambitious thoughts up to Heaven, because they found only men like themselves here on earth, and, as it were, tried to take away the eternal crown from the head of the Almighty, and to place it on their own. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, when they heard the deceitful words

[1] Pater meus diliget eum.

of the serpent, "You will be as gods,"[1] were so tickled by them and were excited to such a pitch of audacity, that, in spite of all threats, they forgot the command of their Creator, and ate the forbidden fruit in order to become as gods. Although by that sin they placed themselves and all of us in the way of eternal death, yet they have had many imitators who strove for divine honors. Domitian published no edict without the words, "Domitian our Lord and God."[2] Menecrates required no other reward from the man whom he cured than the title, He is the God Jupiter. Phoso taught his parrots to say: "Phoso is a god."[3] So general was this ambition amongst the heathens, that in order to have a new divinity, it was only necessary for vanity to inspire some ruler or other with the fancy.

God has abundantly satisfied this ambition, by making men His children in Baptism.

And what, my dear brethren, should most excite our astonishment, the unreasoning folly and audacity of these stupid people, or the goodness of God and His incomprehensible love for them? Instead of drawing the sword of vengeance, and humbling their pride, He has found a means of satisfying most abundantly their ambition and desire for divine honors. For, what has he done? "God has become man," says St. Cyrillus, "so that He is truly adored in human form."[4] So that man can and must now say with truth, God is man, and man is God; consequently, that man, who is God at the same time, deserves divine honor. But it does not exhaust His love, nor complete our dignity to have only one man of our nature, Jesus Christ, who is truly God; but, "the only Son of God having become man, makes many sons of men to be sons of God."[5] For, in Baptism, in which they are regenerated and receive the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, all faithful Christians become adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-natural Son of God, to whom, as co-heirs of Christ, the kingdom of the Eternal Father belongs, as a lawful inheritance, if they bring that grace of the Holy Ghost with them into eternity.

How great is the goodness of God to us.

"Oh, wonderful goodness of God!"[6] cries out the holy Pope St. Gregory; "we are not worthy to be servants of God, and He calls us His friends!"[7] What! do you wonder, St. Gregory, that we are friends of God? That would certainly be an honor and a happiness for us, the like of which we would never hope for or imagine;

[1] **Eritis sicut dii.**—Gen. iii. 5. [2] Domitianus Dominus et Deus noster.
[3] Phoso est Deus. [4] Deus homo factus est, unde in humana figura vere Deus adoratur.
[5] Factus Filius hominis unicus Filius Deus, multos filios hominum facit filios Dei.—St. Augustine.
[6] O mira d'vinæ bonitatis dignatis. [7] Servi digni non sumus, et amici vocamur.

but listen to what the Apostle St. John says: "Open your eyes, open your hearts." And what dost thou desire, what have we to look at? Understand, if you can, the length to which the love of God has gone, who has made us, not merely in name and likeness, but in deed and in reality, children of God. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."[1] If He had merely allowed us to take that name and title, it would have been a far greater honor than we merit; if He had said, simply, I will allow you to call Me your Father, although I really am not your Father; just as He allowed the Blessed Virgin to say of Joseph: "Thy father and I have been seeking thee in sorrow;"[2] even then, this apparent paternity would have been a great honor for us, but He is not content with this. Our heavenly Father wills, not only that we should be called His children, but that we should be so in reality. Dear brothers and sisters, consider well what this means; we are sons and daughters of God.[3] "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him."[4]

What honor and glory for us!

Oh, Christians! what nobility, what honor for us! Have we ever thought of it as we ought? What glory and happiness it is for the children of the world to be the friends and favorites of an earthly sovereign? How proud they are if they can show, in their genealogies or escutcheons, the names of illustrious warriors, cardinals, bishops or statesmen, and say: Look, these people belonged to our family. When Christ said to the Pharisees that He was not of this world, as they were, they immediately appealed to the antiquity of their race, descended from Abraham: "We are of the seed of Abraham;" "Abraham is our father."[5] Whence comes the dignity and nobility of families in our own days? Is it not from their ancestors who, in former times, made their names illustrious, either by valor in war, or by skill in statesmanship, or by other praiseworthy actions, and who were therefore raised to high dignities by kings and emperors? And on this account, all their descendants are separated from the common people and held in greater honor. Yet, if we consider the matter seriously, how can it be to my praise or honor, that some of my ancestors, whose bodies are now crumbling into dust, were great, or skillful, or virtuous people, or were celebrated in

[1] Vidète qualem charitátem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.
[2] Pater tuus et ego dolentes quærebamus te. [3] Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.—I. John iii. 2.
[4] Cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus.
[5] Semen Abrahæ sumus. Pater noster Abraham est.—John. viii. 32–39.

their day, if I have inherited none of their virtues or illustrious deeds? And yet, such things are looked upon as a great honor and glory. How great are we not, then, oh, Christians! in deed and in reality? How much more reason have we not to boast and be proud of that nobility which the Holy Ghost impressed upon us in Baptism; for we are raised above the angels and assumed to a share of the divine nature (as St. Thomas Aquinas says of sanctifying grace) and we become children of the Almighty God. So that we can boast with greater reason and more truth than the Jews did formerly. We are born of God, our father is God,[1] the King of Heaven; we can cry out, as St. Paul says, with the greatest confidence, Oh, my God! thou art my Father![2] Can we imagine anything more glorious? Does not that mean, according to St. Cyrillus, that we have attained the highest degree of nobility, since we are reckoned among the children of God?[3]

The great happiness of this proved by a simile.

St. Augustine, explaining with his usual eloquence the words of St. John, "Dearly beloved, we are now children of God,"[4] makes a beautiful reflection thereon. Suppose, he says, that a man undertakes a long journey and on that journey he is burdened with all sorts of trouble and labor, sickness and misery, and is also poor and needy, and knows nothing of his noble birth and descent; some one meets him and says to him: Sir, do you not know who you are? You are the son of a great nobleman; your father, who is very rich, has ordered me to tell you this and to conduct you to his house. What do you think, asks St. Augustine, would be the feelings of that man on hearing such unexpected news? If he were not in danger of being deceived, how great would not his joy be? Would he not think, oh, how happy I am! I am the son of a rich lord! I should have known that sooner; hitherto I have not known myself. This really happened to Don John of Austria. He was brought up in his childhood by an ordinary citizen, whom he always looked upon as his father. When he had grown up, Philip II., King of Spain, who alone knew the secret, was out hunting one day, with his courtiers, in a forest, where he met the citizen and his son. As soon as the king saw the latter, he leaped from his horse and embraced the young man, to the great astonishment of all present, and to the still greater astonishment of John himself, who, looking upon himself as only a poor boy, did not know what to think of the affair. The king took him

[1] Pater noster est Deus. [2] Clamamus, Abba, Pater.
[3] Fastigium nobilitatis est, inter filios Dei computari.
[4] Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.

respectfully by the hand, and said, "Away with these rags (for the boy was poorly clad), they are not fitting to your dignity. John, you are the son of the great emperor Charles, and I am your brother." Think, my dear brethren, how the young man must have felt, how he must have been overwhelmed with joy; for he was brought with great pomp and magnificence, alongside the king, his brother, to the city and to the royal palace, where he thenceforth received every sign of honor and respect, as the son of such a great father.

What cause have we not, then, to rejoice.

Ah, Christians! what a happiness and cause of joy it is for us to be in the state of grace! Come, says Jesus Christ to each one of us, open thy heart, raise thy mind above the filth of earth to Heaven. Why art thou troubled on the journey of life! Hast thou hitherto known who thou art? Rejoice, for thou art a son, a daughter of a great King; a kingdom is prepared for thee which has neither limit nor end. Come, thou art a child of God, and I am thy brother! Hear, ye poor citizens and workmen, ye lowly servants and handmaidens, ye toiling peasants; the world gives you scornful names, and looks upon you as a wretched people, as the scum of the earth; but the great God calls you His children; Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, calls you His brothers and sisters. Do you but serve your Heavenly Father truly, be careful not to lose the grace of the Holy Ghost by mortal sin, and your nobility and dignity will far excel that of all the heathen kings and emperors of the world. Principalities, kingdoms, empires, no matter how glorious and magnificent they may be, are as nothing compared to the title of child of God.[1] Dear brothers and sisters, exult and rejoice; we are children of God. And when we consider this, can we contain ourselves for wonder and spiritual joy!

The saints could not contain themselves for joy at the thought.

St. Margaret of Cortona, as she once knelt before the crucifix in meditation on the bitter sufferings of Christ, heard Him speaking these words to her: "What dost thou want, my poor little one?"[2] Whereupon she answered: "I want nothing but Thyself, oh, Lord Jesus!" And on another occasion, as she was thinking of the immense love and goodness of God to us mortals, she took courage and spoke thus confidently to her Saviour: "Thou hast lately called me a poor little one, and I am so in reality; for every good thing I have in soul and body is an alms, which I have received from Thee; but, my dear Lord, when shall I have the consolation of hearing Thee call me Thy child?" And then she got

[1] Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus. [2] Quid vis paupercula?

this answer, by an inward inspiration : " When thou hast cleansed thy soul from all stain by a general confession." For some days Margaret redoubled her penances. She repented of and confessed all the sins and the smallest faults of her life with the greatest sorrow, whereupon she heard after holy Communion the sweet and long desired words : " My daughter."[1] At these words she fell into an ecstacy of surpassing joy, and having, as it were, come to life again, after a long time, she cried out aloud. " Oh, infinite sweetness of God !"[2] Oh, happy word—My daughter ! So has the great God called me. Is it possible that I can still live, and that my soul has not left the body at hearing such sweet words ! My daughter ! So has Jesus said to me. What else is there that I can wish for, or desire upon earth?

We can and ought to do the same.

My dear Christian brethren, would not each one of us rejoice also, if we now heard the same words from the lips of Christ : my child, my son, my daughter ? But it is not necessary that He should speak to us so clearly, if we only have a conscience free from sin and are in the state of grace, our own conscience will say the same words to us as St. Paul writes : " For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God."[3] " But if sons, then heirs also, heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ,"[4] and that is the only thing that a Christian should boast and be proud of. " We glory in the hope of children of God,"[5] whether we are of high or lowly birth, rich or poor, honored or despised by the world, matters nothing and is not worth troubling ourselves about ; for temporal prosperity cannot cause us real joy, nor can temporal misfortune cause us real misery ; we glory in the hope of children of God. Our highest honor and greatest happiness, our only joy and boast consists in this, that we are children of God. Yes, says St. Cyprian, " Nothing earthly will ever appear precious, nothing wonderful, to him who says to himself with a lively faith, I am a child of God."[6] This dignity and nobility surpasses everything.

We prize this honor but little.

But, alas ! amongst all the titles of honor and prosperity that are in use amongst men, there is not one less thought of than that of child of God. With what courage, energy, and frenzy are not all the others sought after ? We ruin ourselves with law-suits to gain possession of a handful of earth ; whole

[1] Filia mea ! [2] O infinita dulcedo Dei !

[3] Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus filii Dei.—Rom. viii.16.

[4] Si autem filii et hæredes, hæredes Dei, cohæredes autem Christi.

[5] Gloriamus in spe filiorum Dei.

[6] Nunquam humana opera mirabitur, quisquis se cognoverit filium Dei.

families dispute about the difference between mine and thine; there is any amount of quarrelling and contention about some ridiculous question of precedence, or rank, as if everything depended upon it; nay, even these disputes are brought into the very churches; it is a grievous sin against the laws and regulations of the world if one man does not give another his proper titles; if he does not make a sufficiently profound bow to a lady. But the title of child of God is willingly given up to any one who thinks it an honorable one. The grace of the Holy Ghost, the divine adoption of us as children, which nothing on earth can equal, is looked upon as of no value; the majority do not think of it, nay, they do not even know what it means, nor have they any idea of the dignity to which it raises them. St. Paul, meeting some disciples of St. John on the way to Ephesus, asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?"[1] Do you believe in Him? No, they answered, "we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost."[2] My dear brethren, must I ask the same question to-day? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Do you fully understand this truth, that sanctifying grace makes you children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ? I fear that you would have to answer: We have not heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. We know nothing about it, it is too high for our understanding, we have hardly heard anything of it. Oh! the blindness and ignorance of men! that they should be so ignorant and so inexperienced in the things of faith, which concern their greatest honor and happiness! you know well where your birth-place is, you know where your room, your cellar, your bed is, and you do not know what you are, nor to what the mercy of God has raised you.

Conclusion, with different moral deductions.

I must again repeat to you, my dear brothers and sisters, we are now children of God.[3] Understand this truth clearly, and keep a firm hold of it; let it never slip from your memory, as long as we are in the state of grace, we are children of God. An infallible faith assures me of this, so that parents may say, I must not look upon my children as mine, but as God's, and I must carefully bring them up for the end and object with which their Heavenly Father has intrusted them to me; that is, to the praise and love of God. I must be very careful not to lead them to evil by word, or work, or example. I must keep a watchful eye upon all their actions and omissions, instruct them in good, chastise them, as a parent should, when they commit a fault, so that they may

[1] Si Spiritum Sanctum accepistis.—Act. xix. 2.

[2] Sed neque, si Spiritus Sanctus est, audivimus.

[3] Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.

not become vain children of the world, or be led away from the path of the children of God, and be delivered over to the devil as his prey, through my fault. We are children of God. Therefore, the rich and noble may say, I must not look contemptuously on any one, no matter how poor or lowly he may be, not even on my own servant or handmaid, but I must consider all as children of God. I am a child of God, each one may think for himself, and therefore I must act as becomes my high dignity, and behave as a child of God ought. I am a child of God, so that I must not live as the vain children of the world, according to the false maxims and usages of the wicked world, but according to the law of the children of God, according to the eternal and fundamental truths that Christ, our eldest brother, has left us in his Gospel. I am a child of God, therefore I must and will show all honor and love and childlike obedience, as a well-reared child ought, to my Heavenly Father, under all circumstances and in all places. I am a child of God, so that I have no evil to fear but sin. In all dangers and necessities of soul and body I will fly to my Heavenly Father with child-like confidence, for He knows all my wants; He knows how to help me, and He will help me as He has promised. Into His paternal bosom and all-wise providence do I cast myself and all that belongs to me, with full resignation of my will to His, for I am certain that whatever happens to me will be for the best. I am a child of God, so that it does not matter much if I have many crosses and troubles to bear here on earth, for I am not yet where I ought to be. I sojourn in misery, in a valley of tears; my true country is Heaven. I must comfort myself with the hope of the children of God, that the present short and insignificant suffering will be changed into everlasting joy. My thoughts, desires, and sighs shall be directed principally to Heaven: "Our Father who art in Heaven, Thy kingdom come."[1] I am a child of God as long as I am in the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, therefore I will fly all occasions of evil with the greatest care, I will watch over my senses, that I may never lose this grace by a deliberate mortal sin, nor be cast out of the number of the children of God. If I have sinned, then I will not defer my repentance a single hour, but, by a true sorrow and confession, will free my soul from the unhappy state of sin, and will thus be restored to the number of the children of God. I am a child of God by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, therefore I must spend the

[1] Pater noster qui est in cœlis, adveniat regnum tuum.

precious time that my heavenly Father has given me in this life, in increasing that grace every moment, not in idleness, nor long sleeping, nor in plays and amusements, nor in gaming and dancing. I must not forget the good intention in all my acts, and must often renew it before all my works, so that sanctifying grace may increase more and more in my soul, and that, consequently, the eternal glory that I shall enjoy in my heavenly country may also be greater, until the day when God calls me out of this vale of tears, and I am placed among the number of His elect children in Heaven, to rejoice eternally with Him as my Father, Jesus Christ as my Brother, and with the Holy Ghost, too, by whose grace I am now raised to that twofold dignity. Amen.

FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE LIFE BECOMING THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Subject.

1. By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism, we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ; we must therefore live as becomes children and brethren of God. 2. We are children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ; what a shame for us if we live as children and relations of the devil! —*Preached on Trinity Sunday.*

Text.

Baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. —Matth. xxviii. 19.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Introduction.

All we who are Christians have received this happiness, in preference to so many millions of heathens, that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But all Christians do not acknowledge and profess the greatness of the happiness that falls to their lot in Baptism. I will say nothing of the wretched condition from which we are thereby freed; I will speak only of the high dignity to which we have been raised. We have received a portion of the infinite nature of God, we are in close communion and relationship with the Most

Blessed Trinity; relationship with God the Father, whose children we are; with God the Son, whose brothers and sisters we are; with God the Holy Ghost, by whose grace we are raised to this twofold dignity. Realize, if you can, my dear brethren, the great dignity of this position; children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ! What an honor and glory for us poor mortals, as I explained in last Sunday's sermon. From that sermon we shall now draw the conclusion.

Plan of Discourse.

1. *By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, therefore we must live as becomes children and brethren of God. This shall form the* 1*st part.* 2. *Children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, what a shame it would be for us to live as children and relations of the devil! This shall form the* 2*d part.*

Deliver us from this shame, and make us partakers of the honor opposed to it, O Most Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! This we ask of Thee, through the merits of our Mother Mary and our holy angels guardian.

First Part.

"Honors change manners"[1] is a common proverb. Experience proves it true. If a man of lowly descent is raised to an influential or lucrative position, or is invested with a high dignity, either through good luck, or through his own diligence and industry, or by some great man's favor, then the whole man undergoes a change. If any one who had known him in his former humble state were to see him now, he would wonder whether it was really the same person he beheld, or a complete stranger; so great is the change in his outward manner and behavior, in his clothing, his gait, his speech; for he talks now in a manner suited to his dignity. If it were not so with him, if he remained, as before, lowly, awkward, and simple in his manners, then every one would certainly think that the office or dignity was thrown away on him: a wooden image might as well be ennobled. Even a poor student, who represents the person of a king or a courtier in a play, must and does put on a different demeanor to that usual to him when he goes to school; during the short time he appears on the stage, it seems to him that he really is something

Honors change manners.

[1] Honores mutant mores.

great, and he assumes the proud manner and dignified bearing suited to so lofty a personage.

The old heathens deified their heroes, that the latter might behave as gods.

And this is the reason why, in former times, amongst the heathens, brave heroes either proclaimed themselves to be gods, or were deified by the people. This did not always happen through vanity and empty ambition, nor because the people wished to flatter them; it was rather a clever invention of these men, the object of which was, in making such heroes believe that they were descended from the gods, to induce them to behave in a manner worthy of their divine descent and to do great things for the welfare of their country. Therefore Varro, quoted by St. Augustine, writes: "It is useful for states that brave men should think they are descended from the gods."[1] For, thus they will be forced to live, not as ordinary men, but as gods. Caius Valerius was one of the most vicious and desperate men amongst the ancient Romans; he lived a thoroughly sensual life, like a brute animal. Publius Lucinius, in order to induce him to amend his ways, formed a wise plan, and made Valerius a high priest of Jupiter, which was one of the greatest dignities of the time. It is wonderful how a man changes when he is raised to an honorable position! This dignity made such an impression on Valerius that he became another man. He felt ashamed whenever he thought of his former vicious life, and, as he could before find no one to equal him in vice, so he now was unsurpassed in virtue and honorable conduct. "As he before gave an example of sensual indulgence," writes Valerius Maximus, "so he afterwards became a pattern of modesty and virtue."[2] This change was effected in him by the light of reason alone, assisted by the consideration of the dignity to which he had been raised; so that he saw himself obliged so to live in the sight of honorable men as became the position he occupied.

Christians are children of God; they must live as such.

Ah, Christians! to what are we raised when we are baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity? Do we think and believe what a high dignity is thereby conferred on us? It is an article of faith; we are children of God,[3] and brethren of Jesus Christ. We are admitted to a participation of the Divine Nature; do we then acknowledge that this dignity far surpasses all others in the world, no matter how great they may be? Doubtless we acknowledge that. Now, if a worldly dignity requires that we should

[1] Utile esset civitatibus, ut se viri fortes ex Diis genitos esse credant.

[2] Quantum prius luxuriæ fuit exemplum, tantum postea modestiæ et sanctitatis specimen evasit.

[3] Nunc filii Dei sumus!

live and behave in a proper manner, how are we to live and behave, what sort of a life must we lead as children of God Almighty? Oh, Christian, "ask of thy condition,"[1] says St. Maximus; "see how great thou art and see what thou owest."[2] We are children of God. Well could St. John Chrysostom say: "We ought to be better than the angels and purer than the archangels, since we surpass them all in honor and dignity."[3] What would it help us, he asks further on, to be children of God, if our lives were not conformable to our dignity? "Although you have an illustrious Father, yet that will not be any honor or glory for you unless you imitate Him in your life."[4] "If you are children of Abraham," said Christ to the Pharisees, when they were boasting of Abraham their father, "do the works of Abraham,"[5] and do not be satisfied with mere words. He says the same to us: "If you are children of God, do the works of God;"[6] live as becomes children of God; let it appear in your manners and behavior that you are children of God.

The rule of life for the children of this world, is to do as others like them do.

And, my dear brethren, what sort of a life must that be? See how the children of the vain world act. They consider that life to be suitable and becoming for them which they see and admire in others of a similar condition to themselves, so that we can see how one seeks to imitate the other in everything. It is the fashion, it is the custom, others of my station do the same, they are clothed in such a manner, they send their daughters to foreign countries, they have so many servants, they sleep so long in the morning, they keep such a table, they behave so and so in their visits and conversations, in society and assemblies, &c. I am as much as they and I must do what they do. Equality must be kept up, let it cost what it will; there is no use in trying to persuade them of anything else. See, that is what it means to live properly and according to one's station, in the ideas of the children of the world. "Children of this world,"[7] as they are called by Christ. Best "leave them to themselves."[8]

Hence the children of God must act as others

Christians! we are children of God by the grace of Baptism, in which we renounced the world and its vain works; we must live, then, differently from the world, if we wish to live ac-

[1] Interroga statum tuum. [2] Respice, quantum valeas, et perpende quantum debeas.

[3] Angelis oportet esse meliores et Archangelis majores, ut qui iis omnibus sumus honore præpositi.

[4] Etiamsi celebrem habeas parentem, ne putes tibi illud ad salutem sufficere, aut ad honorem et gloriam, nisi et moribus illi cognatus sis.

[5] Si filii Abrahæ estis, opera Abrahæ facite.—John viii, 39. [6] Si filii Dei estis, opera Dei facite.

[7] Filii hujus sæculi. [8] Sinite illos.

of the same noble descent do, and live according to the life of their divine Father.

cording to our high position and descent. We must see, too, how others of the same station live. Now God is our Father, Christ is our eldest brother, by Him we are adopted children of God; consequently, from Him we must learn the manners, customs, and usages of our lives. St. Gregory Nyssenus says, "We must carefully examine the attributes of our heavenly Father, that we may reproduce them in ourselves as far as possible, and so be legitimate children of God.[1] St. Peter Chrysologas says, "Let us live according to our descent, not for the world, but for heaven, which is our inheritance, and let us show forth the likeness of our Father in ourselves."[2] This is the warning of the Son of God Himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, in sanctity of life, as your heavenly Father is perfect."[3]

That means to imitate Jesus Christ.

But how? you will say, as Philip said: "Lord, show us the Father."[4] We have never seen Him, we know not what He is like. How, then, can we be like to Him? Hear the answer that was given to Philip and to us: "He who sees Me, sees also my Father."[5] In Me you have the image of my heavenly Father and yours. From Me you shall take pattern and example, as to how you are to live and to behave according to your high dignity as children of God. "Learn of Me."[6] What? To be meek and humble of heart, to be temperate and amiable with all who contradict you, to be merciful and patient. He who will come after Me, must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, as I have done. Then you will be really children of your Father who is in Heaven.[7] See, my dear brethren, how much is said in a few words. The life and conduct proper for the children of God is the imitation of the life of Christ.

But that is done by very few Christians.

But, alas! how few Christians there are who really practise those virtues! With what reason has not Christ Himself complained: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."[8] They are much more energetic and diligent in adapting and suiting themselves to the world and to their equals among the children of the world, than the others in harmonizing their lives with that of the Son of God,

[1] Exacte convenit inspicere Genitoris nostri proprietatis, ut ad similitudinem Patris nosmet formantes, legitimi filii fiamus Dei.

[2] Respondeamus generi, vivamos cœlo, Patrem similitudine referamus.

[3] Estote ergo perfecti, sicut Pater vester cœlestis perfectus est.

[4] Domine ostende nobis Patrem. [5] Qui videt me, videt et Patrem meum.

[6] Discite a me [7] Ut sitis filii Patris estis, qui in cœlis est.

[8] Filii hujus sæculi prudentiores filiis lucis in generatione sua sunt.—Luke xvi. 8.

and with the lives of those holy children of God who imitated Him. How is it with us, my dear brethren? How are your lives and mine regulated? "All you who are baptized, have put on Christ as a garment." [1] When Joseph's brothers had dipped his coat in the blood of a kid, they showed it to their father Jacob, and said, "See whether it be thy son's coat or not." [2] If we were now to appear before our heavenly Father, to give an account of our lives, and the angels asked: See whether that man has on the garment of Thy Son or not; dost Thou acknowledge his life to be an imitation of the life of Thy Son? what sort of an answer would be given? Ah, what little resemblance there is! How the beautiful robe, that I gave thee in holy Baptism, is soiled and torn! No, I can see nothing like my Son in that man, and, therefore, nothing becoming my children. And how would it be if our heavenly Father were to reproach some of us, on account of our perverse and vicious lives, as the Son of God formerly reproached the Pharisees: I do not acknowledge you as my children, you belong to your father, the devil, [3] whose works you do. After I had adopted you as my children, and given you that holy name, not only did you not live according to your dignity, as becomes my children, but you lived as children and slaves of the devil. What a shame that would be for us, Christians! For our admonition we shall consider this in the second part.

Second Part.

The ancient heathens considered it a shame for a slave to represent a god in a play.

In the celebrated city of Athens, a play was once produced, in which the person of the god Bacchus was to be represented. There was no one capable of taking the part but a certain slave, who belonged to a noble named Nicias. The slave, having obtained permission from his master, performed the part of Bacchus so well, and was so sleek and well formed, that the whole audience were mightily pleased, and congratulated Nicias on having such a talented slave. Nicias, who was present, said with an earnest countenance: Henceforth I do not wish to keep him as a slave, and I give him his liberty. The people were very much surprised at this apparently strange conduct, for they thought he would look upon it as an honor and pleasure to possess such a slave, who could please so well by his acting. Certainly, answered Nicias, it is an honor for me, but it would be a shame for

[1] Quicunque baptizati estis, Christum induistis.
[2] Vide, utrum tunica filii tui sit, an non?—Gen. xxxvii. 32. [3] Vos ex patre diabolo estis.

him to remain my slave, and therefore I give him his liberty; for it is not right that one who has represented the person of a god, should serve a man in slavery. These are the words of Plutarch in his history: "He stood up, and because he thought it a shame that the body consecrated by representing a god should be any longer in slavery, he freed the young man."[1]

What a far greater shame it is then for a child of God to be a slave to the devil by mortal sin.

And now I ask you, my dear Christian brethren, is there any comparison between a senseless idol and the true and living God? between a false and a true divinity? Certainly not, as you must acknowledge. I ask you again, is there any comparison between a man who represents the person of a false god, by means of a disguise, for an hour or so, on the stage of a theatre, and one who has received a real participation of the divine nature, a child of the Most High God? Certainly not, you must again acknowledge. I ask you a third time, can any comparison be made between the servitude and slavery in which some poor man serves another man, in order to earn his bread, and that by which a child of God, an heir to the kingdom of Heaven, is held under the yoke of the devil? And you must answer, certainly not. Now, we are the image of the true God, we become His children by adoption in holy Baptism, as our infallible faith teaches us. If, then, an ignorant heathen could see, by the light of reason alone, that it was wrong and shameful for a poor man, who represented the person of an idol only on the stage, to serve another man as his slave, what reason can ever grapple with the enormity of the shame, if a child of God becomes a slave to the wicked spirit of evil? And yet, all those who consent to a mortal sin are in this slavery, and with their own full consent and deliberation. As the Apostle says, speaking of all sinners: "And they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will."[2] What a shameful dishonoring of one's self and one's own high dignity! The bare idea of the son of a rich man sinking so low, through his own fault, that he is reduced to feed swine and to satisfy his hunger with the husks thrown to them (as the gospel says of the prodigal son), the bare idea of this is enough to make one shed tears of pity and compassion; what a pitiful thing, then, is it not, to think that a child of the true God should, by his evil conduct and vicious life, abandon his

[1] Surrexit, deoque dicatum corpus servire, nefas se putare inquiens adolescentem manumisit.

[2] Resipiscant a diaboli laqueis, a quo captivi tenentur ad ipsius voluntatem. II. Tim ii. 26.

heavenly Father, lose his eternal inheritance and become a slave to the devil, while his soul is perishing with hunger!

Alas! how many there are who sink to that vile and wretched state for the sake of a momentary pleasure, a little money or a worthless gain. Of such as these may the complaint of the Psalmist with truth be uttered: "When man was in honor he hath not understood;"[1] "he hath lowered himself to the senseless beasts, and is become like unto them."[2] "Their glory they have changed into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay."[3] So he speaks of the godless Israelites, who, after having been so wonderfully led by God Himself in the desert, and after having been protected and fed by Him, adored a golden calf as their god. Could not the same complaint be made of most Christians? St. Paul, wishing to give the baptized Ephesians a true idea of the great grace they had received in Baptism, and to lay down a rule of life for them to follow quite opposed to that they had formerly observed, says to them: "You were dead in your sins, wherein, in time past, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief, in the desires of the flesh, by nature children of wrath; you being heretofore gentiles in the flesh, having no hope of the promise, adulterers, thieves, avaricious, calumniators, idolaters." Such were you formerly; but rejoice and thank the divine mercy, for now you are justified and cleansed from those sins, and are sanctified in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God. "You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."[4] You were formerly slaves of the devil, now you are children of God. "Fellow-citizens of the saints and friends of God."[5] But I, my dear brethren, could invert these words of the Apostle, and say to many Christians: You were formerly justified and enlivened, and sanctified in holy Baptism, but now you are dead in sins of all sorts. You were formerly children of light, but now you are children of anger and darkness, who walk according to the world, the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. You were formerly children of God, fellow-citizens of the saints, friends of God, but what are you now? For your great shame, you are slaves of the devil, adulterers, idolaters, avaricious, thieves, calumniators, drunkards, blasphemers. I say adulterers, for St. Paul calls by that name, not only those who

Very many Christians live in this way.

[1] Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit.
[2] Comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis.
[3] Mutaverunt gloriam suam in similitudinem vituli comedentis fœnum.
[4] Eratis aliquando tenebræ; nunc autem lux in Domino. [5] Cives Sanctorum, et domestici Dei.

give way to the foul desires of the flesh and violate the sanctity of marriage, but also all sinners who dishonor the grace of Baptism for the sake of a vain and frivolous creature, although they were brothers and members of Jesus Christ. I say idolaters and blasphemers, for, according to St. Jerome, "We adore as many new gods as we have sins and vices."[1] If anger makes me violate the law of God, then anger and desire of revenge have become my god.[2] If I look at a person with an impure pleasure, lust has become my god.[3] Am I proud? Then pride is my god. Do I eat and drink to excess? Then my sensual appetites are my god.[4] See, I repeat to so many Christians, you have deliberately reduced yourselves to this disgraceful condition, you, who before were children of God.

Conclusion and warning to sinners.

Like St. John the Apostle, I cry out to all those who are still in the state of sin and in the slavery of the devil: "Remember, oh, sinner, whence thou art fallen,[5] think of the honor and dignity to which thou wast formerly raised, and the shame and disgrace in which thou art now, and, after having considered thy wretchedness, resolve with the prodigal son, "How well off are even the servants in my father's house, and I am here among swine!"[6] In what an honorable position are the children of God, who love my heavenly Father, as good children ought, in whose number I formerly was; can I not return to them again, if I will? Why do I still remain among the slaves of the devil? I will arise at once, I will hesitate no longer; I will arise and return to my Father,[7] by a sincere repentance! I will say to Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; I am not worthy to be called Thy child![8] Receive me again into Thy favor, and let me hear, to the great joy of the angels, "I have found again my child who was lost."[9] Yes, sinners, such will really be the case, if you only return to your heavenly Father with contrite hearts.

To the just.

But for you, my dear brethren, or holy hearers, as I should call the just, for you are, as I hope, children of God in the state of grace, my conclusion must be in the words of St. Leo: "Oh, Christian, recognize thy great dignity, and, since thou art made partaker of the divine nature, be careful not to return to thy former vile-

[1] Quæcunque vitia habemus, tot recentes habemus deos.
[2] Iratus sum, ira mihi Deus est. [3] Libido mihi Deus est.
[4] Quorum Deus venter est [5] Memor esto itaque, unde cecidetis, et prima opera fac. —Apoc. ii. 5.
[6] Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei sunt, etc. [7] Surgam, et ibo ad patrem.
[8] Dicam, Pater peccavi: jam non sum dignus vocari filius tuus.
[9] Filius meus perierat, et inventus est.

ness by an unworthy life."[1] Such was the warning of the elder Tobias to the friend who was ridiculing his piety: "Speak not so, for we are children of saints."[2] Such should also be the daily teaching and warning of parents to their children, of masters and mistresses to their domestics, and of each individual to himself: Do not speak so foolishly, leave off swearing and cursing; away with quarrels, abusive language, back-biting, lies, and impure conversation; for we are children of God, who must speak an angelic, a divine language. Away with impure imaginations and desires, with thoughts of vengeance, or despair, or pusillanimity. For we are children of God, whose hearts must be always in Heaven, with their Father, in childlike confidence and uniformity with His holy will. Let nothing of the pride, impurity, injustice, or drunkenness of the world be seen in your conduct, and, to say all in a word, avoid everything that has the least appearance of sin; for we are children of God, who must lead a holy life. In nearly the same way King Menedemus tried to inculcate good manners on his son. When the son was once invited to a feast, and asked leave of his father to go, "Go," said the father, "but remember thou art the son of a king."[3] He meant by these words, do not forget who thou art, always behave in a manner becoming the son of a king. Ah, Christians! do not forget who you are. Wherever you be, whether you stand or walk, in whatever you do, remember, you are the son of a King; let each of you remember and think to himself, I am a child of God. If you are alone in your own house: remember, think, I am a child of God, my Father sees me, although no one else does. If you are in company; remember, think, I am a child of God, and behave in such a manner, that every one may see, from your conduct and conversation, from your temperance and modesty, that you are a child of God. As often as the devil with his temptations, the flesh with its unbridled desires, or other men with their evil example, tempt you to sin, forget not what you are. Remember, think, I am a child of God; I will do nothing against God, my heavenly Father, nor against the high dignity I possess as His child. In prosperity, when everything goes on according to your desire, say, I am a child of God;[4] I value that more than everything else. In adversity, when the sensitiveness of nature prompts to impatience, remember, think, I am

[1] Agnosce, O Christiane dignitatem tuam et divinæ consors factus naturæ noli in vetcrem vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire.

[2] Nolite itaque loqui, quoniam filii sanctorum sumus.—Tob. ii. 17–18.

[3] Sed memento, regis filius es.

[4] Dei filius sum.

a child of God; God is my Father and He will take care of me. It is the will of God, my heavenly Father, that things should be with me now as they are. My inheritance is the kingdom of Heaven; it is there I expect my happiness and unending joy. And that the remembrance of this may be always before you, use these words, for a time, as an aspiration: I am a child of God;[1] I love Thee, my heavenly Father. By this means our thoughts, words, and actions shall be such as are becoming Christians, and we shall insure to ourselves the reward of which St. Paul speaks. If we are children of God and live as such, then we are also heirs of God,[2] and joint heirs with Christ, our eldest brother, and with the elect children of God, we shall one day possess eternal happiness, in our heavenly Fatherland, with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DIGNITY AND OBLIGATION OF MEN WHO HAVE ANGELS AS THEIR GUARDIANS.

Subject.

Every man has an angel to guard him. 1. How God loves and values man! 2. What great reverence and gratitude each one owes his angel guardian!—*Preached on the Feast of the Holy Angels Guardian.*

Text.

Angeli eorum in cœlis semper vident faciem Patris mei.—Matth. xviii. 10.

"Their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven."

Introduction.

I have read an unusual text for you to-day, my dear brethren, because the Catholic Church celebrates a peculiar feast to-day, to which the usual Sunday's Mass and office must give way, namely, the Feast on which we thank and honor our holy angels guardian. I owe these angels far too much ever to forget them, or to pass by their feast-day in silence. When I consider, on the one hand, what sort of creatures angels are, and on the other what sort we men are, and that each one of us has his own

[1] Dei filius sum. [2] Si filii . . . . . et hæredes.

angel guardian, good God! I say with astonishment, how is it that Thou so lovest man? Holy angels! what do we not owe you? Such is the matter of to-day's sermon, or rather meditation.

Plan of Discourse.

Every man has an angel to guard him: the leading idea. How God loves and values man! the first consideration and first point. What great reverence and gratitude each one owes his angel guardian: second consideration and point.

The object is to awaken in us a constant devotion and love of God and of the holy angels. All ye heavenly spirits, and you in particular, Queen of Angels! I have hitherto experienced undoubted benefits from your assistance; therefore, on this day, which is one of special honor for you, I do not doubt that you will help and assist me, so I begin with great confidence.

First Part.

All princes, counts, and nobles, of whatever degree they may be, give to their children, especially when they travel in foreign lands, an intelligent, prudent, pious and well-mannered tutor, whose office it is to accompany the young nobles at all times, and in all places, to direct them, to instruct them in good manners, to teach them according to their high position, to protect them from being led astray, and, when necessary, to punish and reprove them. To that end, they give the tutor full power and paternal authority over their children, and the latter must obey them as their own father. The tutors, on their side, must also frequently inform the parents, by writing, how their children are getting on, for it is of great importance to a noble family that its children should be brought up and behave in a becoming manner. Now the tutor need never be of nobler birth than the children. Sometimes we see rich counts who are entrusted with the care of the sons of kings or emperors, and nobles who become tutors to princes; but who ever heard of a count or a prince, not to say a king, undertaking the office of tutor to the son of an ordinary nobleman? The higher in rank will never undertake this duty for one who is lower; for a tutor generally receives a yearly salary for looking after his pupil, and he may also look forward to some other reward to induce him to use all possible diligence and care in the fulfilment of his duty.

When princes travel, a tutor is sent with them

You see already, my dear brethren, what is the meaning of this simile: we are all children of one Father, to whom all of us, who have the gift of faith, cry out every day, "Our Father, who art

We men, who are children of God, are

travelling in a foreign land amidst innumerable dangers.

in Heaven."[1] But as long as we are on this earth, we are in a foreign land, we are sent as travelling strangers into this vale of tears, as St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "My dear brethren, we have to know, that while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord."[2] Oh, my God! who can count, or even imagine all the dangers and snares that threaten both soul and body, to which we are daily, hourly and at every moment exposed in this strange land? We are surrounded by visible and invisible enemies who are plotting our eternal ruin. The greater number of people, in spite of the helps they so frequently receive, allow themselves to be led astray, and are ruined eternally. What would become of us if we were abandoned to our own weakness, without any helper, guardian, or leader to take care of us?

God protects us against them with different helpers.

Therefore, our heavenly Father takes care of His own, and looks after His children in a foreign land with a more than fatherly care; for, in the first place, we are all bound to look after each other, according to the Wise Man: "And he gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor."[3] By virtue of this commandment, every one is bound to help his neighbor to good and to the salvation of his soul, however and whenever he can. In the second place, He has so divided the world, and arranged it in order, that each kingdom, province, and district has its king, its prince, its lord, every town and community has its superiors, by whom it is guarded and governed in its temporal interests, as well as bishops, parish-priests, and clergy to instruct it in spiritual things and to lead it to Heaven. Further, every household has the father or mother of the family as its superior and head, to look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the family with parental care, according to the warning of the Apostle: "For they watch as being to render an account for your souls."[4] (Take notice of this, parents and fathers of families!) And is not this enough, oh, my good God, for Thy bountiful Providence to do for men? especially, since, in addition, Thou Thyself art always present to help and protect them with Thy continual, unceasing care?

God has besides given each one of us an angel as tutor.

No, my dear brethren, we have a great King as our Father, and we have the happiness "to be called and to be children of God."[5] All this is not enough for His glory and wealth, and

[1] Pater noster qui est in cœlis!

[2] Scientes, quoniam dum sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino.—II. Cor. v. 6.

[3] Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.—Eccl. xvii. 12.

[4] Ipsi enim pervigilant tanquam rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.— Heb. xiii. 17.

[5] Ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.—I. John iii. 1.

for the love and esteem that He has for His children. Besides all this, He has given to every one, no matter who it may be, even to the poorest beggar, and to the most wicked sinner, a special tutor and guardian for his journey, who is invisible to mortal eyes and is never absent from the object of his care. And what kind of a tutor is it? Oh, man! "He has given His angels charge over thee, that they should guard thee in all thy ways."[1] Here I could wish to have a more than angelic intelligence, in order to understand properly the nature of these heavenly spirits, and to represent it to your minds. But, since no eye can see, no ear hear, no finger touch them, we cannot represent them to our imagination, and so I must keep silent on this head, lest I should, like the angel that St. Augustine saw, endeavor to pour a fathomless ocean into a little hole with a spoon; a folly I should certainly be guilty of, if I attempted to describe, with my own unassisted reason, the excellence of the angels.

The dignity and excellence of the angels.

Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, you whose minds were so especially enlightened by God, to whom He revealed supernatural things and hidden mysteries, lend me your words and your testimonies, that we may form some idea of the greatness of those heavenly princes, the angels. All acknowledge, with St. Thomas of Aquin, that the lowest and least among the angels surpasses, in nature and excellence, the most perfect of mortals, as much as the brilliant light of the sun exceeds that of the stars. They are called the first-born of God, the first invention of the Divine Wisdom, the first masterpiece of active Omnipotence, the first fruits and flowers of nature; so speaks St. Augustine. Alas! what are we men in comparison with these heavenly hosts? Poor cripples composed of flesh, skin, and bone; while they are pure spirits, not subject to decay and death. Our origin is the slime of the earth, theirs, the beautiful Heaven; we are born in ignorance and weakness, they are created full of wisdom and strength; we are in misery, they in happiness; we in danger, they in security, for they really enjoy the beatific vision of our heavenly Father.[2] If it is true, as St. Thomas teaches, that the number of the angels surpasses that of all other created things, in which teaching St. Gregory agrees, we may ask with the Prophet Job, "Is there any numbering of his soldiers?"[3] The stars in the heavens, the different animals on earth, the plants, the leaves on

[1] Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.—Ps. xc. 11.
[2] Semper vident faciem Patris mei, qui in cœlis est.
[3] Numquid est numerus militum ejus?—Job xxv. 3.

the trees, the fish in the sea, what a vast number they make, and yet, if they were all taken together, they would not equal the number of the angels. And further, if it is true, according to the opinion of the same Angelic Doctor, that not one of the angels resembles another in excellence, but that one is more beautiful, wise, and powerful than the other, then, I must think, since the lowest of the angels possesses such great excellence, who can understand the glory and greatness of the higher choirs, since one surpasses the other in excellence? Do you wish to know something of the natural strength and power of the angels? Read the 19th Chapter of the 4th Book of Kings, and you will see that a single angel slew, in one night, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers; one angel, even the least powerful, says the learned Suarez, has strength enough to oppose all the powers of hell.[1] One angel, says Cardinal Ægidius, would be enough to protect the whole world. The Holy Ghost calls them in the canticles, "the choirs of armies."[2] And therefore the Church sings, "with all the soldiers of the heavenly host."[3]

The beauty of the angels.

St. Bridget, in her Revelations, speaks of the great beauty of the angels; if you only could catch one glimpse, she says, of the beauty of an angel, your body would fall asunder with joy and wonder, like a worm-eaten vessel. St. John the Apostle, that eagle who saw so much of the Godhead that the whole heavens and the Divine Nature were shown to him, yet, when he once saw an angel, was so enraptured with his beauty, that he fell down on his knees to adore him as God, as he himself says: "I fell down at his feet, to adore him."[4] What is the reason that, in the Book of Genesis, which gives such a particular account of all that God created on each day, there is not a single word about the creation of the angels, although they are the most excellent amongst all creatures, as far as their nature is concerned? Theodoret answers this question, which he puts to himself, as follows: It would not have been good for the people of the Old Law to have known anything about the angels, for, they were so addicted to idolatry, even to the extent of worshipping a calf as their god, that they would certainly have adored the angels, had they known anything of their invisible, noble, and glorious nature.[5]

The Prophet Daniel can give us some idea of the glory and majesty of the angels, for he saw one, whose clothing

[1] Ita ut minimus angelus custos possit potentiæ totius inferni resistere.
[2] Choros castrorum. [3] Cum omni militia cœlestis exercitus.
[4] Cecidi ante pedes ejus, ut adorarem eum. -Apoc. xix. 10.
[5] Quid non perpetrassent invisibilis naturæ notitiam assecuti.

he has described: "I saw him," he says, "and I was so overwhelmed by his majesty, that there was no strength left in me; and the appearance of my countenance was changed in me; and I fainted away and retained no strength."[1] Certainly, it was his beauty and excellence that made Lucifer so conceited and proud, that he thought himself equal to the Almighty God, and when it was announced to him that he must one day adore God in human form, he began to rise up against God (in this his sin consisted, according to the general teaching), as if he thought it a shame for such a great spirit as he was to subject himself to one who was to be clothed with weak human nature.

These mighty princes of Heaven are guardians of our souls and bodies.

Behold, my dear brethren, it is these glorious princes of Heaven that our heavenly Father gives to you and me, poor mortals as we are, to be our tutors, guardians, and leaders, nay, even, so to say, our servants and attendants, as long as we are sojourning in this earthly pilgrimage. "Behold," says the Lord, "oh, man, and see my goodness, learn how I love and value thee. I send my angel,"[2] "who is to go before thee, and with thee and to protect thee on thy way,"[3] who will never depart a hair's breadth from thee during thy whole life: "who will bear thee in his hands,"[4] wherever thou goest or art during the day. And in the night, when you are asleep, he will stand by your bed, and keep a continual watch over you. If you ask him to do so, he will put you right when you go astray on your journey; and many must be persuaded of the truth of this. If you ask him in the evening with confidence, he will awake you in the morning at the desired hour; as many experience every day. Finally, his greatest care will be to watch over you alone, so that no evil may happen, against your will, to either your soul or your body. "With great care and watchful diligence our guardian angels are with us at all times and in all places, providing for our necessities."[5] Such are the words of St. Augustine. In what necessities, do you say, St. Augustine? In all. What particular hours of our lives do our angels keep guard over us? At all times without exception. In what places? In all places, at home and abroad. And what angels are thus made our tutors and guardians? Not the

[1] Vidi, et non remansit in me fortitudo; sed et species mea immutata est in me, et emarcui, nec habui quidquam virium.—Dan. x. 8.

[2] Ecce ecce mitto angelum meum. [3] Qui præcedat te et custodiat in via.

[4] In manibus portabunt te.

[5] Magna cura et vigilanti studio adsunt nobis omnibus horis, atque omnibus locis custodes angeli, providentes necessitatibus nostris.

lowest only but also some from the highest choirs. The Apostle says: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"[1]

What great esteem and love God thus shows for us.

Oh, David! As you were once considering in deep meditation the beautiful sky with its twinkling stars, the vast earth with all its fruits, the boundless ocean with all its fishes, the great expanse of air with all its birds, you thought that all this was created by God for man's use, and ravished out of yourself in sheer astonishment, you cried out: "Oh, Lord, our Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? Thou hast subjected all things under his feet. Oh, Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth?"[2] But, oh, Prophet, how does that astonish you, when you say, immediately after that, God is not satisfied with having subjected to man all things under heaven, but he has also given what He has in heaven, namely, His holy angels, His own courtiers, for the service of man. You say in the same place, "Thou hast made man a little less than the angels."[3] Yes, it is true, that so far as our nature is concerned, we are poor beggars compared with those mighty princes of heaven; but when you consider their office, could you not say rather, Thou, oh, Lord, hast raised man somewhat above the angels,[4] inasmuch as Thou hast given them to him as guardians.

What a dignity for our souls.

My dear brethren, what are we to think of all this? When Tobias learned that it was an angel who had shown the way to his son, he and all his family prostrated themselves, through holy fear, on the ground. "Then they lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God. And rising up they told all His wonderful works."[5] Oh, souls of men, how God esteems and values you, cries out St. Jerome: "Oh, surpassing dignity of souls that each one should have an angel sent to guard it."[6] Could we have a clearer proof of the divine clemency, love, and goodness to us? If God the Son had not died for us, if we had received no other benefit from Him, this alone should suffice to convince us that we are very near, so to speak, to the heart of

[1] Omnes sunt administratorii spiritus, in ministerium missi propter eos qui hæreditatem capiunt salutis.—Heb. i. 14.

[2] Domine, Dominus noster! Quid est homo, quod memor es ejus? Omnia subjecisti sub pedibus ejus. Quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!—Ps. viii.

[3] Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis. [4] Exaltasti eum paulo magis supra angelos.

[5] Trementes ceciderunt super terram in faciem suam; tunc prostrati per horos tres in faciem, benedixerunt Deum. Et exsurgentes narraverunt omnia mirabilia ejus.—Tob. xii. 22.

[6] Magna dignitas animarum, ut unaquæque habeat in custodiam sui angelum delegatum.

God, that He is very much concerned about man, and that it is His sincere wish and desire that all men should be saved. This alone would be enough, if we have not hearts of stone or steel, to force us to love, with all our strength, and with our whole hearts, such a kind and loving Father. Christians! think a little over this matter, and see whether it is not so. And we think so seldom of it! Have we even once reckoned that amongst the benefits we receive from God, and thanked Him for it? Why have we not done so? Now, at least, let us begin with Tobias to relate the wonderful goodness of God to us, to praise and to bless Him for it. There is still another point to consider: every one has an angel guardian; what reverence, love and gratitude does not each one owe his angel! Have we ever thought of that? Let us do so now, and briefly.

Second Part.

The many benefits we receive from our angel deserve our greatest gratitude.

Even if the holy angels were not given to us as guardians, if they were in no way connected with us and we were quite strange to them, if we could neither hope nor expect any benefit from them, we should still have reason enough to hold them in great respect; for, if it is according to the natural order and to all laws that inferiors should show reverence and respect to superiors; if we must honor even foreign princes, to whom we are in no way subject, how much more are not we mortals bound to honor the holy angels, whose glory and excellence far surpasses that of all earthly kings and potentates? But now, oh, man; whoever you are, count, if you can, all the moments of your life, recall to your memory all the dangers that threatened your soul and body, from which you have been happily saved; all the dangers to soul and body into which you might have fallen, but which have been kept away from you. How often might you not have fallen down in your childhood and broken a leg, or an arm, or even your neck? How often might you not have fallen down stairs or into the fire? How often, in after years, might you not have been drowned, struck with lightning, or with a thunderbolt, pierced with a knife or sword, shot with a bullet, or crushed beneath a falling rock or beam? Count the sins you have committed, and those which you might have committed; how often were you in such a state, that if an accident had happened to you and you had lost your life, you would have been condemned to hell forever? How often were you in such a state that the devil and all his creatures were looking out for you, like sleuth-

hounds, their teeth watering with the desire of being revenged on you, and awaiting only the word of their Creator to fulfil their desire, and out of that state you have been saved by an inward impulse, that you felt, to repent and to recover the state of grace? Count the temptations which sometimes assailed you so violently, and which you overcame, and the temptations and snares which the enemies of your soul laid for you, and from which you were protected. How often have you had, in this or that occasion, a desire to sin, which you opposed by the fear that you felt within you? How often have you wished to go into that house, or that company, in which you would have been in danger of sinning, when something occurred to prevent you? How often might you have incurred many dangers from temptations and seductions, especially in your youth, and you were saved from them all? Count the inspirations that have impelled you to read a spiritual book, or to hear a sermon, by which you have been kept away from evil, or incited to do good. Count all the good thoughts you have had in your life, which have been to you the occasion of meritorious works: when you can bring all these, and a lot more that have escaped your memory, before your mind, then you may cry out with astonishment: My holy angel, what do I not owe thee? These are the benefits I receive from my tutor and my guardian, which he either obtained for me from God by his intercession, or bestowed on me himself, or which were given me through his instrumentality; since, according to the general teaching, God does everything by means of the angels.

Especially since they are much greater and nobler than we are.

And this great service has been rendered to me, a poor, miserable mortal, for such a long time, so carefully and so constantly by a great, mighty, beautiful, and blessed Prince of Heaven. What an honor, nay, what a humiliation! What Clianus writes of the whale is remarkable. This great monster, since it has small eyes and bad sight, would often be exposed to dangers from other fishes, and from different causes, and could not long avoid them, if nature had not given it a pilot and conductor. This pilot, says Clianus, is a small fish of a white color,[1] which swims continually before the whale, is always on the lookout, and when it sees any danger, it gives due warning: it leads the whale to its feeding place, and guides it away from rocks and stones which might do it an injury; in a word, it does everything that, among human beings, one friend can do for another. The same an-

[1] Piscis est parvus colore albo.

thor says it is a very remarkable thing that nature has given to such a small animal the charge of such a huge one.[1] But that does not excite my wonder so much as if the contrary were the case, and the big fish rendered those services to the little one. I should certainly be astonished at that, for it is a common and daily occurrence for the less to serve the greater; but that the greater should be at the service of the less, day and night, that a mighty whale should conduct a small fish about the ocean, that would indeed be wonderful. And precisely on this account, it is no mere natural effect, but an extraordinary beneficence, and an unspeakable love for us mortals, that makes the angels serve us as they do. What are we in this life, my dear brethren? "Men are as the fishes of the sea,"[2] says the prophet Habacuc, and if we compare ourselves to the holy angels, what small and worthless fishes do we not appear, in contrast to these heavenly princes, whose greatness and might our whole nature cannot reach. Nevertheless, one of these great angels has, up to the present, done me all these services and a great many more, and as long as I live he will not cease to serve, protect, and watch over me. What a great dignity that is, I must repeat, and what a humiliation!

They perform these services for us, though we are unworthy of them.

And these services are performed for me by one who has not the least need of me, and who can expect no reward, to say nothing of profit or utility from me, as tutors expect from their pupils. If I gave him, like Tobias, the half of my goods, or even the whole of them, what would it profit him? He has no need of such thing, so that he serves me gratuitously. What goodness! And he showed me that goodness many times when I refused to listen to his warning voice, despised his inspirations, turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and troubled him with my sins. I have so often tried to drive him away from me, and he would not leave me; he still remained with me and continued his usual watchful care of me. What mildness, patience, and mercy on the part of my angel! And hitherto I have hardly even thanked him, hardly thought of him once during the week. What monstrous ingratitude on my part! And in my temptations, dangers and difficulties, I have hardly ever had recourse to this guardian, who is always at my side, although he is so powerful and so anxious and ready to help me. What a want of confidence! And in his presence, before his eyes (I am ashamed of

[1] Quod mirum videri debet.

[2] Homines quasi pisces maris.—Habac. i. 14.

myself when I think of it), I have dared to commit those crimes, which, in order to keep them hidden from men, I committed only in darkness and in secret, to use language which I would not wish an honorable man to hear, and to be so proud, vain, immoral, and passionate in my thoughts, desires, eyes, and behavior, that I have reason to blush even before a mortal like myself. What shameless depravity!

We must therefore, in future, show them all the more honor, gratitude, and love.

When I consider all this, what must I think, what conclusion must I draw? Is it not right that, in the future, I should show all the more devotion, confidence, honor, and love to this, my greatest benefactor, in proportion as I have been hitherto so rude, so thoughtless, so ungrateful, so shameless and so impious towards him? Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, all make the resolution which St. Bernard suggests: "Let us then all be devout to these great guardians. Let us thankfully return them love for love. Let us honor them as much as we can and ought."[1] If we do this with all our strength, it will still not be a sufficient return for the great and manifold benefits we have received from them. It is not in vain that I implore the assistance of the holy angels guardian, in the beginning of all my sermons. My end and object in so doing is to remind you of your duty of honoring the angels. As often, then, as you hear that, in future, let each one think to himself, there is another hint, another warning for me to reverence my angel guardian. And make this resolution also: no day of my life shall pass without my doing something in his honor, either by going on my knees before his image, or by doing a certain work, or by visiting the sick, or giving alms to please him. I shall set apart a certain day of the week in his special honor. In all my business, you, oh, holy angel, shall be my help and support; in doubt you shall counsel me, and console me in trials and difficulties, for I shall always call on you for help. As often as the wicked enemy shall assail me with temptations and evil inspirations, whenever wicked men try to lead me into sin, or my own corrupt flesh incites me to unlawful pleasure, you will be my protector, to you I will fly for refuge, with as much confidence as the child runs to its mother's lap, and I will cry out, as the younger Tobias did to his guide, when the huge fish leaped up at him to devour him: See, oh, master, my holy angel! he is attacking me.[2] The blood-hounds of hell are opening their jaws to

[1] Simul igitur tantis custodibus devoti simus; grati redamemus eos: honoremus eos, quantum valemus, quantum debemus.

[2] Dom'ne, invadit me!

devour my soul, temptations are troubling me and I am afraid of being faithless to my God. "Help me, holy angel, protect me, that I may not perish."[1] What have I to fear with you on my side? And at the end of my dangerous journey, when my troubled soul shall be most in need of help, when, on my death-bed, the journey into eternity will begin, you shall be my companion on the way, who, as I trust, will lead me into the land of eternal joys, where I, with the greatest thankfulness, and amidst the congratulations of all the heavenly court, shall see my heavenly Father, and say, as the younger Tobias said to his father on his return home: Behold, this angel has conducted me to and fro, and has happily led me hither.[2] I must thank him that I have not been devoured by the fish, by the hellish dragon. Through him we have received all kinds of benefits:[3] there, oh, holy angel, I shall be thy companion in joy for all eternity, and with thee, I shall praise and love the infinite beauty of God forever. Help me, that this may come to pass. Amen.

SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSARY OCCUPATION OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

1. It is necessary for us to be always and entirely occupied in that alone which concerns God and our soul's salvation. 2. The great majority of men know little or nothing of this one necessary occupation.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Nesciebatis quia in his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse? "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"—Luke ii. 49.

Introduction.

The Incarnate Word of God preaches for the first time; who would not wish to listen to Him? The Master of all masters gives His first lesson; who could doubt of its truth? It is true that it is a Child of twelve years who is speaking; but it is also He who is from eternity, and who inspired the prophets with what

[1] Salva, Domine, nos perimus. [2] Me duxit et reduxit sanum.
[3] Bonis omnibus per eum repleti sumus.

they had to say. Let us hear, then, oh, Christians, what Christ preaches to us: I must, it is necessary for me; what? "I must be about my Father's business."[1] Oh, that is certainly a truth of great importance! But, alas! the greater part of men could be asked, regarding it: Did you never know anything about it?[2] It is necessary that you, as well as I, should be always occupied in those things which concern my Father and your souls. Did you know that before? Oh, gracious God! as necessary as this is, there are few who have a right idea of it, as I will now prove by Thine own words, and bewail.

Plan of Discourse.

1. *It is necessary for us to be always and entirely occupied in that alone which concerns God and our soul's salvation. Such is the subject of the first and principal point.* 2. *The great majority of men know little or nothing of this one necessary occupation. Such will be the sad complaint of the second point.*

Oh, wisest of all teachers, Jesus Christ, who excited the admiration of all in the temple, give to me to-day, and to all here present, a clear insight into this great truth: it is necessary, and teach us, too, to deplore our blindness, which has caused us to be hitherto so ignorant of that truth! This we ask of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary, and the intercession of our holy angels.

First Part.

A necessary, important, and indispensable occupation must be undertaken by us with all diligence.

We are obliged to perform, with all diligence and at all times, that business, for the sake of which alone we are sent into this world, and which, if we neglect it, will cause us an irreparable loss. For instance, a servant is dispatched to Treves, in order to appear before the prince, on a certain appointed day, and at a certain hour, to give an account of the service rendered by him, so that he may be promoted to a higher and more lucrative position. Suppose that you are acquainted with this man, and that you invite him, at the time appointed for his business, to dine, to play, to dance, to hunt, or to amuse himself with you, would he allow himself to be persuaded by you to accept the invitation? No, he would say, I have something else to do now. I must appear at court, for it is for that alone that I came to Treves. Oh, never mind that, you would answer, come with me and let us amuse ourselves. What! he would reply, amuse myself? There is no time for that now; what I have to do is much more im-

[1] In his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse. [2] Nesciebatis.

portant. But, you might say again, there will be time enough to-morrow. No, he will answer, I have been ordered to come, not to-morrow, but to-day; if I lose the opportunity now, I lose all my future prospects with it. It is not a profitless or trifling thing that I have to do to-day; there is question of my promotion, on which all my future life depends. I must consider that before everything else.[1]

Such is the business of our salvation, for that alone is necessary for all men.

My dear Christian brethren, of this kind, and of far greater importance, is the business that we have to do concerning God and our souls. For what end and object are we in this world? What are we doing here? Ask the children in the catechism class why man was created. They will know how to answer better than many grown-up people, and they will tell you that man was created to know God, to love God, to serve God, and thereby to bring his soul to eternal happiness. This is the one necessary occupation, of which the Son of God spoke to Martha: "One thing is necessary,"[2] without which all the others are worthless, to which everything else we undertake must tend, as to its final object. I may be rich in this world, and have gold and lands, but that is not necessary; it is not for that that God has sent me here. One thing is necessary, and that is, to serve God and save my soul. I may be held in honor and esteem by men, but that is not necessary, it is not for that I am sent here; one thing is necessary, to serve God and save my soul. I may live in quiet and peace, in pleasures and lawful enjoyments, but that is not necessary, I am not created for that. One thing is necessary, to serve God and save my soul. That I can and must do, although I may be poor and despised, although I may be living in trouble and misery. That is the business on which the whole life of man hinges, and it concerns each and every one of us, without exception, to attend to that. Such are the words of the Wise Man: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man,"[3] that is to say, every man. This is the business of the Pope, in governing the Church; of the king, in ruling his kingdom; of the courtier in the palace; of the soldier in the field; of the merchant in his counting-house; of the laborer at his work; of the father of the family in his household; of the servant and hand-maid in their employment. To fear God and be eternally happy: "For this is every man." The Pope was not sent into the world to be Pope; the king, courtier, citizen,

[1] Oportet me esse. [2] Porro unum est necessarium.—Luke x. 42.
[3] Deum time, et mandata ejus observa, hoc est enim omnis homo.—Eccl. xii. 13.

peasant, merchant, soldier, father of a family, all these are not in this world to be kings or citizens, peasants, merchants, or servants, but to serve God and save their souls. This is the chief occupation, which alone the Apostle Paul calls our business. "My dear brethren, one business I wish and desire you to perform, that you abound more in every good work;"[1] "and that you do your own business."[2] All other worldly occupations, no matter how great and important they may seem, are, when compared to that, what St. Augustine calls "most worthless trifles and most empty vanities."[3]

All other business must be done for the sake of this alone.

The same St. Augustine says, when explaining the words of Christ, "Seek first the kingdom of God,"[4] that the meaning of our Lord is, not that we may seek anything else in this world besides the kingdom of God; but that, first of all, that is, with the greatest care, we must seek nothing but the kingdom of God and the salvation of our souls in every business we undertake. It is not forbidden to labor for worldly wealth, for food and clothing, in order to support decently ourselves and those who depend on us; it is not forbidden to work and to be diligent in the performance of the duties and services required of us, nor to get through our ordinary tasks carefully; nay, even we are commanded to do the duties of the state of life to which God has called us. But no one must separate his daily labor from the business which concerns God and the soul, as if they were two different occupations, one of them consisting in serving God and working for salvation, the other in looking for temporal prosperity and in serving the world. No; all this must form but one business for us all, and must tend to the end and object for which we are created. Money and property: you must be sought for, and labored for and kept, only as a means of serving God better and securing the soul's salvation. Good name and reputation before men: you are praiseworthy and good, only in so far as you can help the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and no farther. Eating and drinking, sleeping and other bodily necessities and conveniences: you must be used and enjoyed for no other purpose but to keep up our strength that we may be able to serve God longer and more zealously, and to gain eternal happiness for our souls. Worldly joys, honors, and riches: you cannot make me happy, if you do not help in the business of my soul to this

[1] Negotium rogamus, ut abundetis magis in omni opere bono.—I. Thess. iv. 10.
[2] Et ut vestrum negotium agatis.
[3] Nugæ nugarum et vanitates vanitatum.
[4] Quærite primum regnum Dei.

end; you will make me miserable if you are, in the least degree, a hindrance to me in the business of my soul. Humiliation, contempt, poverty, and contradictions from the world: I must not be esteemed unhappy on your account, if I can only serve God by means of you, and work out my salvation; you are even good and desirable to me, if you furnish me with a better opportunity of doing this. Every thought, word, and act that cannot be referred to this business, is vain and useless. Every thought, word, and act contrary to this business, is sinful and damnable; for this is my only necessary business. Because, "I must be about my Father's business,"[1] in which alone I must be always and everywhere occupied, to serve God and to save my soul: for this reason alone, I have been called by God, for this alone am I in the world.

Everything depends on this business.

And, woe to me! if I do not perform this business carefully and terminate it successfully. No favor of an earthly master, no lucrative employment in a worldly court, is to be won or lost thereby; everything depends on it: an endless eternity, an eternal Heaven, the perpetual favor and friendship of the great God of Heaven, an eternal crown of honor, an unfailing treasure, perpetual, indescribable joys in Heaven; all these things depend on this business and occupation, as to whether they are to be won or lost in a short interval of time. Ah, my God! imprint deeply on my heart and memory every one of these words of Thine, that I may never forget them: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul;"[2] and lose Heaven? "What doth it profit him?" What are the base joys of earth when compared to the beauty of Heaven? What is the praise of man, compared to the dignity of Heaven? What are the vain goods of the world to the eternity of Heaven? "What doth it profit him?" What is the good of all these things if I lose Heaven forever? Oh, what a terrible loss! But, woe is me! now that I think of it, it is not alone the loss of the eternal good, but everlasting damnation also that depends on this great business of mine. It is a very different thing from a temporal, worldly business. If the servant delays beyond the appointed time, and loses the promotion his prince promised him, he has certainly lost his good fortune, but he has not therefore incurred a misfortune: he has gained nothing, but neither has he lost; he re-

[1] Quia in his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.

[2] Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur.—Matth. xvi. 26.

mains as he was before. But how will it be with us, my dear brethren, how will it be with all of us, if we neglect the business of our salvation during the appointed time of this life? We shall lose an eternity of happiness, and, at the same time, incur an eternity of misery. If I do not gain all, I lose all. If I am not in eternal joys, I am in eternal torments. If I do not go to Heaven with God, I must remain in hell with the devils. Either Heaven, or hell, forever; there is no other alternative, no third place for Christians during eternity. My dear brethren, is there any business of such importance as this, any on which so much depends? Is it not right, then, that we should direct all our thoughts, desires, cares, and troubles to the successful accomplishment of that alone?

When it is once neglected, the injury cannot be remedied.

Now if this were the same as any worldly business, there might be some hope of a remedy, in case it is neglected. The profit that I lose to-day by carelessness, I may make to-morrow by redoubled diligence, or if I cannot find exactly the same good fortune, I may find something very like it, if I wait long enough. But, oh, man, if you neglect the business of your soul during life, where will you find another life in which to serve God? If your soul is once lost and damned, where will you find another to make eternally happy? We have only one life, and that a very short and uncertain one, for this business. We have only one soul; if that is lost, then all is gone, and forever; there will never be any chance of repairing the loss. In the Areopagus, in Greece, as Father Catanæus writes, there was once a curious case tried. Listen to it, my dear brethren. In those days the old law prevailed, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth,"[1] so that he who gave another a box on the ear, had his own ears boxed, without further trial; he who beat another, was beaten in return; he who killed another, lost his own life. Now it happened that a tradesman, who was blind of the left eye, lost the other eye also, in consequence of a blow that he received from an opponent. The criminal was convicted, the crime proved, the law clear, and the sentence was, that he who put out the other's right eye, should himself lose his right eye also. But a skilful lawyer stood up and said: "Wait, my masters, it must not be so; the sentence is not just." "How is that," said the others, "the law says, 'eye for eye.'" "Yes," he answered, "when the circumstances of the case are the same on both sides. To put out the eye of a man who has only one, is a far greater injury than to deprive of one eye him who has two, for the

[1] Oculum pro oculo dentum pro dente.

former must remain completely blind all his life, while the latter, having one eye left, can still see. Hence the punishment decreed is not proportioned to the injury suffered. The poor tradesman, having lost his only eye, can no longer see: the sun is darkened for him as long as he lives, he has nothing but a continual night, he will never more be able to see his wife and children, his parents and dear friends, nor anything else in the world. Is not that a grievous misfortune which this wicked man has caused him? Consequently, according to justice, the punishment must be equal to the crime, and he who deprived another of his sight, must himself lose his sight completely also, and if he had a hundred eyes in his forehead, they should be all put out, for the loss of one eye is as great to him who has only one, as the loss of a hundred is to him who has a hundred; for it is just as impossible for him to see as if he had lost a hundred thousand eyes." Thus spoke the wise lawyer, and he showed thereby how irreparable is the loss of a thing that is absolutely necessary and that we can have only once.

Therefore we must attend to this business with all diligence.

My dear Christian brethren, if one man had a hundred souls, and another only one, and the latter lost his only soul, while the former lost his hundred souls all at once, is not the loss of him who has but one soul just as great as that of him who has a hundred? Let the latter die one bad death, and the former a hundred bad deaths, is not the eternal misery of hell just as great for one as for the other, if the lives of both have been equally bad? Ah! we have only one soul to lose, we can die only once! If we lose that one soul, then all is gone and the loss is irreparable. Should we not then undertake such an important business with all possible diligence, in order to bring it to a successful termination? Oh, certainly! it is necessary;[1] with this business we should be always occupied, in it we should be completely occupied, with it alone we should be occupied, to serve God and save our souls. But, alas! (and we can make this complaint before God) did you not know[2] that? Of all business, that of the soul is the only one of which the majority of men care to know little or nothing. This just complaint we shall consider briefly in the second part.

Second Part.

This business is, generally speaking, set aside.

Many men do not know that they are created for this end and object alone; for they occupy themselves with anything rather than the business of their souls. Many do not know that all de-

[1] Oportet [2] Nesciebatis?

pends on this, for they hardly ever think of it. Many do not know that its loss is irreparable, for they do exactly the contrary thing. See, my dear brethren, how just is my sorrow, when I consider the life that most men lead. Who is not astonished at the stupidity of the Emperor Michael of Constantinople? A courier once came to him in great haste, when he was at a tournament, and brought him word that the greater number of his provinces were in revolt against him, and had taken up arms against their emperor: he therefore begged of the emperor to find some means of quelling the rebellion, or else his throne would be in the greatest danger. Such news as that certainly demanded prompt and careful attention. But what did the emperor do? He got into a great passion with the courier, not through anger at the rebels, nor through impatience at the bad news, but because, as he said, he was disturbed during the tournament with such trifles. Oh, you foolish man! you look upon rebellion among your subjects and the imminent danger of losing your crown as trifling things, of so little importance that you are not to be disturbed in your amusements on their account. So that the caracoling of horses is a far more important matter in your eyes, and deserves your closest attention! But why should I say anything about this emperor? There was question only of losing a temporal crown. Blind mortals! I have far more reason to complain of you! do you not act in the same manner, although there is danger of losing your soul and forfeiting eternal happiness? To enjoy yourselves and have a pleasant time, to be full of cares day and night and to run to and fro to make some profit in your worldly business, to hoard up money and worldly goods, to curry favor with the great ones of the earth, to obtain a prebend for yourselves or those belonging to you, to gain a lawsuit, to get your son or your daughter married advantageously, these are the things that keep your mental and bodily powers always on the stretch, says Thomas a Kempis; for these things you can never look out soon enough, nor long or carefully enough. To keep up the state of the family, to leave a rich inheritance to their descendants, to build houses, to cure their bodies, to procure food and clothing, to eat, drink, and sleep well, these are occupations in which the greater part of men spend most days in the year and most hours in the day. And what becomes of the service of God? What of the salvation of the soul? Oh, that is, generally speaking, the last thing of all; that may be attended to when all the other things are secured. A courier comes to many a one, and says to him, there is a revolt in your kingdom;

that is, God, by His inspirations, calls out to those in the state of sin, and preachers warn them with the word of God: poor man! you are in the greatest danger of losing your soul forever; the devils are on the look-out for it, when death surprises you. Quick, you must immediately seek help; do not loiter, go at once and show yourself to the priest,[1] examine your conscience, repent of your sins, confess them, perform your penance, and rescue yourself from this dangerous state! Eh! what nonsense you are talking; I will do it some other time, next Easter; I have something else to do now. A courier comes—a good inspiration in the morning—to say that it would be well to hear Mass, and thus to begin the day with God. No, my business does not allow me: I must first attend to what concerns my house, my condition, and the world. A courier comes, with the sound of the bell on Sundays and holydays, to say that it is time for the sermon; God will now instruct you in matters relating to your soul's salvation. No, it does not suit me now, I should have to get up too soon, I must sleep a little longer, I must dress first, it is too cold, and so forth; some other time. Christ Himself comes, in the person of some poor man, to your door: Give me an alms, for God's sake! No, I cannot give you anything now; some other time, when I am richer. The Apostle Paul cries out: Parents, bring up your children in the fear of the Lord, to their last end. Oh, they can learn that later on; they must first know the world, learn foreign languages, and know how to play, to fence, and to dance, and how to behave in society. An uneasy conscience gives warning: do not go to that house, nor into that company—your soul might be in danger there. Oh! that does not matter, perhaps there will be no danger; it will be time enough to keep away when I find out that there is danger. On the other hand, if an eye pains us, if there is danger of a fever, or some other illness, not to say of death, there is no talk then of putting it off to some other time, or of having something else to do, but to-day, at once, immediately, the doctor must be sent for, and medicines must be procured. And so, generally speaking, all other occupations have the preference in time, care, and diligence; the business of the soul is the only one that is put off to the last moment. All trouble taken with the former seems light, while the least care employed on the latter appears exceedingly grievous and intolerable! Ah, stupid mortals! did you not know[2] that this is the only and most important business, for

[1] Vade, ostende te sacerdoti.—Matth. viii. 4. [2] Nesciebatis?

the sake of which you are in the world, and that, therefore, all your care and labor must be bestowed on it?

Many hardly think of it.

But, there is little use in talking! there are many who hardly think of it earnestly once a day. If we could see into the hearts of others, what a swarm of thoughts, ideas, and opinions would we not find, and hardly one amongst them that has reference to the affairs of the soul. How often does the merchant in his office, the tradesman at his work, think of his last end? I will try to consider the thoughts of one who is about to make choice of a certain state or occupation, on which the whole of his after life, and his eternity, generally speaking, depends. It is, for instance, some one who wishes to marry; what is the direction of his thoughts? Yes, he thinks, that person is suitable for me, she is rich, of a noble family, and I can live contentedly with her. And is that all? Will you be able in that state, and with that person, to serve God and to secure your soul's salvation better than in any other state of life? There is no thought of that, that business must look after itself. Another man is looking out for some employment; what are his thoughts? Is the employment a profitable one, is it not too laborious, is it a respectable one in the eyes of the world, will it enable me to keep up a certain style, &c., &c. Has he thought whether he is able to fill the position or not? whether he can satisfy God and his conscience therein? whether he can save his soul in that position? Alas! those are the last thoughts that enter his mind. That child must become a clergyman. Why? because he has fortunately received a benefice, he will be able to live respectably. But is the child called to that state of life by God? Will he certainly be able to work out his salvation therein? What a question! I do not even dream of such a thing. And so it goes on, as if the business of the soul were nothing at all to us, or as if it could look after itself while we are asleep. Ah, Christians! of what use is our reason to us if we do not use it for the one thing necessary, for which it was given to us, namely, to gain Heaven and to escape the eternal pains of hell? This very reason we use, or rather abuse, in the veriest trifles, while we utterly neglect the most important business of all, on which all depends. We can hardly bring ourselves to think seriously upon it.

Many do the exact contrary, as

I have made a mistake, my dear brethren, and to my greatest sorrow, when I said that many hardly think of the busi-

ness of their souls. They do think of it, they give themselves a deal of trouble and labor about it; but why? That they may lose their souls, that they may forfeit Heaven and be lost for all eternity. This requires no proof; all sinners, who constitute, unfortunately, the majority, show the truth of this: for all their thoughts, desires, undertakings, and labors have only the one object, to satisfy sensuality and the lusts of the flesh, to gratify their thirst for revenge, to practise injustice, to commit sin. Well may you weep and lament, oh, Jeremias! "They give their beloved soul into the hands of its enemies."[1] They often labor and suffer more to lose their souls than others do to gain Heaven. Precious, immortal souls, bought by the Blood of Jesus Christ, how blind you are to your own salvation! How I pity you! How many millions of you are ruined eternally! "Did you not know?"[2] did you not know what it is to lose Heaven, a place of eternal joys, to gain which we should easily and willingly spend a hundred millions of years in the most abject misery? did you not know what it is to be condemned to hell for all eternity, that is, to a place of torments so great that all that men have suffered from the beginning of the world, and all they can suffer to the end of it, is as nothing compared to them? You lose this Heaven so recklessly, you give your souls to hell for such miserable things in a short and uncertain life!

If they knew nothing of it.

Ah, my dear brethren, I ask of you all, not for my eternal welfare, but for your own, in the words of the Apostle: "I ask of you to do your own business,"[3] your only business, your most necessary business, at all times and with the greatest care. I must go about my Father's business.[4] Let that be our conclusion. I must necessarily, as long as I live, be employed in the service of God; I must necessarily, let it cost what it will, save my soul. If, in future, a creature, an occasion, or a temptation tries to allure you into sin,—"I must, it is necessary"[5]—let the thought come immediately, no, it is not for that I am here, I have another business to attend to, I must and will save my soul. In everything that happens to you, think and say every day, with that holy servant of God, who always used to ask himself before commencing anything: "How will this help me to save my soul?"[6] Will it help my soul to attain its last end? If it is likely rather to hinder me from doing so, away with it! even if I could there-

Conclusion and exhortation.

[1] Dant dilectam animam suam in manus inimicorum ejus. [2] Nesciebatis?
[3] Rogamus, ut vestrum negotium agatis. [4] In his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.
[5] Oportet me esse. [6] Quid hoc ad vitam æternam?

by gain the whole world and all its joys. "What would it profit me,"[1] if I lost my soul on its account? That soul, which will still exist when the whole world is destroyed! that soul, for which God would give a thousand worlds! that soul, for the love of which God has given His own life's blood! that soul which, if once lost, cannot be saved for all eternity! But is this business of my soul a profitable one? Then I must and will undertake it with all my strength, no matter how hard it is to nature and sensuality. I must and will serve God; I must and will bring my soul to Heaven. Is it necessary to this end that I forget those sinful thoughts and love my enemy? Then come here, my dear enemy; I forgive you from my heart. Does that end require me to restore the property of others? Then, away with whatever I have no right to, even if I were to be reduced to beggary. Must I, for my soul's sake, leave that person, that friend, that house, that company, which is the proximate occasion of sin to me? Then good bye to them, once for all; no matter how dear they are to me, I will have nothing more to do with them. Must I, for my soul's sake, do penance, chastise my flesh, mortify my five senses, renounce the vanities of the world, enter on the narrow way of humility, poverty, persecutions, trials, and contradictions, and suffer these things whenever God decrees that I should do so? Then come, you will henceforth be my dearest friends. I must and will go to Heaven. Amen. Most merciful God, strengthen me in this resolution. Amen.

SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE FALSE AND TRUE HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

True happiness is nowhere to be found in the world; so that most people trouble themselves about it to no purpose. Let us therefore seek Jesus, in whom alone true happiness is to be found. —*Preached on the Feast of the Epiphany.*

Text.

Usque dum veniens staret supra, ubi erat puer.—Matt. ii. 9. "Until it came and stood over where the Child was."

[1] Quid prodest?

Introduction.

There, where the poor Child lay in the stable, the star finally rested; there, where the Child was, the three kings found what they were seeking in such a long and tiresome journey. They went in, they saw, recognized, and adored their King, their Saviour, and their God.[1] What joy, what consolation and sweetness filled their hearts in the presence of this Child! Who can describe it, unless they who have experienced it? My dear brethren, all of us mortals are following a star also, I mean the star of happiness, for it is well known that happiness is called a star. All men, great and small, old and young, rich and poor, follow this star. "Every man," says St. Augustine, "no matter who he is, wishes to be happy."[2] But how few there are, alas! who reach this star of happiness! How many, after long striving, come back empty-handed, because this star would not stand still for them! Nay, even the greater number, notwithstanding their endeavors, cannot even catch a far-off glimpse of that star. On that account, so many are heard to sigh everywhere: Oh, what an unhappy man I am! I have no luck, no happiness! I seem to have been born under an unlucky star, &c. And why is this, my dear brethren? Because we do not seek for that star in the proper place, where it is really to be found. We run over the whole earth and give ourselves no rest in the pursuit of worldly goods, and we place all our happiness in them. Ah, no, Christians! we should not do that; such labor is in vain, for our star is not to be found in worldly goods. And where then? Follow the three kings. There, where Jesus is,[3] there is our star and our happiness. Where Jesus is not, there is neither star nor happiness for us. As I shall show in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

True happiness is nowhere to be found in this world, so that most people trouble themselves about it to no purpose. That is the subject. Let us therefore seek Jesus, in whom alone true happiness is to be found. Such shall be the conclusion.

Jesus Christ! our only end, our highest good, we beg of Thee to-day, through the intercession of Thy Virgin Mother, and our holy angels guardian, to let the star of Thy grace shine before us, that we may see the vanity of worldly goods, and seek our happiness in Thee alone.

[1] Et intrantes invenerant puerum. [2] Omnis homo, qualiscumque sit, beatus vult esse.
[3] Supra, ubi erat puer.

In what true happiness consists.

True happiness, as all agree in describing it, consists in the certain and peaceful possession and enjoyment of a true, perfect, and lasting good. If one of these qualities is wanting, then there is no true happiness. A good thing may be great and beautiful in itself, but as long as you have not certain possession of it, or cannot enjoy it, it cannot make you happy, any more than the coat that I wear cannot keep you warm; nay, even the greater the desire one has for something he cannot attain, the greater is the pain he feels; just like a hungry dog, who sees a piece of meat hung up above his reach, and keeps snapping at it with his teeth, although he cannot get at it. And supposing you actually enjoy some good, if it is not a real one, you are again at fault. Who would think a fool happy because he imagines himself a king, and that he has authority over countries and peoples, and that he is seated at a well-spread table, although in reality he can hardly get bread and water enough to keep himself from starving? Such a man deserves Christian compassion and is not to be felicitated on his condition, for, although he is happy in his own imagination, yet, since the good he thinks he possesses is only an unreal one, he is in reality an unhappy man. Further, the good must be a perfect one; for, as long as there is the least thing wanting to you, or you feel the least uneasiness, you cannot call yourself happy. Ask some hungry beggar man, who has managed to slip into a theatre, where he sees and hears everything that can delight his eyes and ears; say to him: My good friend, are we not both very happy in being present at such a fine play, and in having such a good place to see it from? Yes, he will answer, that is all very fine, but I wish I had something to eat, for neither music, nor singing, nor dancing will fill my stomach, and I am very hungry. Finally, it must be a constant, lasting good; the greater the joy and pleasure one has in a thing, the more is he troubled, even in the midst of his joy, at the thought of losing it in a short time. So that no one can have true happiness, unless he enjoys a true, certain, perfect, and lasting good.

This is not to be found in any worldly goods.

Vain children of the world! You may well despair of finding your star of happiness in the world, as long as you do not find Jesus. Walk, run, fatigue yourselves as much as you will, and if you find the star, let me say to you, like Herod: "When you have found it, let me know, so that I too may come"[1] and be happy with you. But I am afraid that I would remain

[1] Cum inveneritis renuntiate mihi ut et ego veniens.

here for eternity before one of you would come back to me with the joyful news. St. Augustine asks: "Are you looking for a happy life in the land of death?"[1] You foolish people! what do you mean? There is no such thing there.[2] For, tell me, what good can you find in the whole world? St. John describes it for us: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life;"[3] that is to say, riches, honors, and sensual pleasures, that is all. So that, if I were to describe to you a man who is happy, in the estimation of the world, I should represent to you one who is looked up to and beloved by all, who has money and property in abundance, who spends day and night in sensual gratifications, so that he cannot wish or desire more of these things than he already has. Oh, what a happy man, you would say, admiringly; he was born under a lucky star. But, God help us! what a wretched happiness that is! what a plastered-up poverty! Have you nothing else, oh, world, to give to those who love you but these false goods? Away with you and your beggar's wallet; your wares are rotten, the things you offer are no good, they are useless and transitory. I am sorry for those whose desires carry them, day after day, to such a worthless shop, while they forget the real happiness that they should seek elsewhere.

For they are only vain goods.

Tell me, in God's name, what are the goods of the world? Ask St. Nilus, and he will say: "All worldly things are shadows, smoke, and empty bubbles."[4] What can be more worthless? If you grasp at them, nothing remains in your hand. What is more unsubstantial than the smoke, which is driven away by the wind, or more perishable than the air-bubble, which is all the more likely to burst, the bigger it gets? "Oh, ye sons of men!" sighs the Psalmist, "why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?"[5] Money! what is it but shining earth, which is precious because it is rare? Take a handful of iron, or a few needles, to many countries in the East, and you will get gold enough for it. In former times shoe leather was used instead of silver coin. Many think more of a copper penny than of a golden ducat. The value of such things depends on caprice and imagination. Honor, favor, a great name, what else are those things but the esteem in which one is held? There may be, perhaps, a hundred people

[1] Beatam vitam quæritis in regione mortis? [2] Non est illic.

[3] Omne, quod est in mundo, concupiscentia carnis est, concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitæ.—I. John ii. 16.

[4] Omnia mundana umbræ, fumus et bullæ sunt.

[5] Filii hominum, ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis mendacium?—Ps. iv. 3.

who have a great opinion of me, but what better am I for that? There may be, on the other hand, a thousand who cannot bear me. What worse am I on that account? That does not make me more wicked than I am in reality. So that all this is mere imagination. What are sensual joys and gratifications but vile pleasures which belong properly to the brute beasts and which we enjoy in common with them? One takes pleasure in one thing, another in another, all being led therein by the imagination. There is nothing in the world but falsehood, it possesses no real good. "Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?"[1]

They are uncertain goods.

But what is the use of taking so much trouble to prove the vileness and emptiness of worldly goods? I shall not succeed in convincing those who love them. Very well, then, granted that they are precious and worth having. But, tell me, how do you come to that conclusion? How can you bring all the necessary conditions together in any worldly goods? Show me one man who has everything that he wishes for and desires, one, that is to say, who has money enough, honor enough, pleasure enough. You will not find one such person in the whole world. You will find many, in fact, the greater number, who labor for these things, who desire and strive for them day and night, like the dog snapping at the piece of meat, but they are always unhappy because they never can attain the object of their desires. St. Augustine asks, "What is certain on this earth?"[2] "You hope for money, it is uncertain whether you will get any; you hope to marry a certain person and you know not whether your hope will be fulfilled."[3] Since these things are so uncertain, thousands of people toil and worry themselves about them, and no one gets all that he wishes to have. The labor and trouble that we give ourselves seem to me to resemble the spider's web, as the Prophet says: "They have woven the webs of spiders."[4] The spider draws all the material for its web out of its own body: and to what purpose? To catch any fly or gnat that may perchance fall in its way. And when the poor spider has spun itself out, after days of labor, and is contentedly waiting, perhaps a week, for some fly or other insect to come into its net, the housemaid suddenly comes and, with one sweep of her broom, puts an end to the whole affair, and to the spider itself in the bargain. "They have woven the webs of spiders." The children of the world go through the same fruitless labor, when they seek after worldly goods and place their

[1] Ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis mendacium? [2] Quid in hoc terra certum est.
[3] Speros pecuniam, incertum est, an proveniat; speras uxorem, incertum est, an accipias.
[4] Telas araneæ texuerunt.—Isa. lix. 5.

happiness therein ; they are trying to catch gnats and flies, and get caught themselves in the end. How often, how many days and years have we not worried ourselves to get that property, that employment, or that person in marriage ? How many sleepless nights and troubled days have we not passed, how many plans have we not invented for the sake of these things ? And when we thought that everything was ready to carry out our project, there comes the housemaid and sweeps it all away with her broom: a sickness comes and confines us to bed ; death comes and hurries off into eternity the person on whom we had built our hopes of happiness. Sometimes our designs are crossed by another person, or some difficulty comes in the way that we cannot surmount ; there is an end to all our hopes ; we have caught no flies, our labor is fruitless. Such is the way of the world ; it shows us its goods from afar off, and there is hardly any one who can have as much of them as he desires.

These goods are imperfect and mixed with evil.

But what am I saying about goods and pleasures ? Does not everything that we seek in this world contain more gall and bitterness than pleasure and sweetness ? Can there be any real pleasure in that good which, before we possess it, costs so much labor and trouble, while we have it, causes us so much care and anxiety lest we should lose it, and when we are deprived of it, fills us with grief ? Ah, the saying of St. Augustine is only too true : " The bonds of this world have in themselves a real bitterness, a false pleasure, a wearying labor, an anxious repose, abundant misery, and a vain hope of happiness."[1] If there was ever a man who had the goods of the world in abundance, it was King Solomon ; he had treasures and money as plentiful as the stones in the street, as we read in the 10th chapter of the 3d Book of Kings ; he was so highly esteemed for his wisdom that kings and queens came from far distant lands to Jerusalem to hear him and admire him. Of the pleasures he enjoyed, which were such as no man, except himself, ever had enjoyed, or ever will enjoy, he says himself : " Whatsoever my eyes desired I refused them not ; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared."[2] Was he therefore happy ? Hear his sighs : " Behold, all is vanity and affliction of spirit."[3] What a bitter sorrow it

[1] Vincula hujus mundi asperitatem habent veram, jucunditatem falsam, durum laborem, timidam quietatem, rem plenam miseria, spem beatitudinis inanem.

[2] Omnia quæ desideraverunt oculi mei, non negavi eis, nec prohibui cor meum, quin omni voluptate frueretur.

[3] Ecce universa vanitas et afflictio spiritus.

is to lose the good that one has sought and loved, by misfortune, sickness, or death? How true the saying of the Prophet about the world: "I nourished them with joy: but I sent them away with weeping and mourning."[1]

They are inconstant and transitory goods.

And, my dear brethren, what makes worldly goods so contemptible, and takes all semblance of happiness away from them, is the fact that they can be enjoyed for such a very short time. Even if they were real goods, even if every one could have as much of them as he desired, and in the highest perfection, without trouble, or anxiety, or bitterness—a supposition that contradicts the experience of every one of us—still, oh, heart of man! they cannot make thee happy. Tell me, how long do you think this worldly happiness will last? Not longer than your life. Once death comes, you must leave all behind. He will take away from you honors, riches, pleasures, and life itself. You have often noticed how, when a great lord makes his entrance into a town, he is preceded by a number of mules, decked out with bells, and carrying vessels of gold and silver. If a miller's ass saw all this grandeur at a distance, he would, if he had the gift of reason, wonder at the great happiness of the fortunate mules; but let him wait till evening, and he would see them stripped of all their finery and tied up in the stable; their grandeur is at an end. And what good is it all to them now? They are tired and wearied out with carrying it all day. The miller's ass is much better off, for he goes to his stable all the same, although he may not have carried a single sack of corn the whole day, because there was no water to turn the mill. My dear brethren, that is exactly like the world. While we are in this life, some of us live in great splendor and magnificence, and enjoy all kinds of pleasure, to the detriment, if not of the body, at least of the mind, and soul, and conscience. The evening comes, death knocks at the door, and we are hurried bare and naked into a long eternity, in which the beggar will be just as rich as a king or emperor. As we cannot be sure of our lives for a single moment, neither can we be sure, for a moment, of possessing the goods that we love so much. St. Augustine asks: "What can the world promise? Let it promise what it will, it promises to one who may die to-morrow."[2] Often this happiness does not last as long as life. Are you rich in money and property? It will not take much to make you a

[1] Nutrivi illos cum jucunditate. Dimisi autem illos cum fletu et luctu.—Baruch, iv. 11.

[2] Quid potest mundus promittere? Quidquid libet, promittat, fortassis crastino morituro promittit.

poor man ; death is not necessary for this, a single misfortune may do it. If a war breaks out, a party of the enemy may plunder you, a thief may rob you, one of your debtors may become bankrupt, the lightning may strike your house and set fire to all you have ; and there you are, a poor man in spite of your former riches. Are you high in favor with your prince? How little it takes to destroy it all ! A calumny whispered by your rival, a slight fault committed by yourself, a simple suspicion of your fidelity is quite enough to unseat you, to deprive you of your office, and to put your happiness to flight. Have you all the pleasures and enjoyments you could wish for ? How long will they last ? A fever confines you to bed—nay, not even that is necessary, a toothache suffices—your child, your wife, your father or mother die, you become quite depressed, you have no taste for anything, your pleasures and enjoyments are gone. A rich man, who was highly esteemed by great princes, as Draxelius narrates, was once asked what he could still desire for himself in this world, and he answered : I want nothing but a nail, by which I may fix my happiness so that I cannot lose it. This nail has not yet been found, my dear brethren. Everything is transitory, changing, short-lived, and momentary. St. Paul says : "For the fashion of this world passeth away."[1] "What hath pride profited us," the children of the world will one day exclaim, but too late, like the wicked in the Book of Wisdom, "or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ? All these things are passed away, like a guest of one day that runneth on like a post."[2]

Most men seek their happiness in such goods, but in vain.

See, Christians ! on account of these false, imperfect goods, which are full of care and bitterness, while they are, at the same time, changeable and transitory, on account of these, people travel over the whole world, and plough the deep with their ships ; on account of these they plague and worry themselves day and night. He who possesses such goods is a happy man in the eyes of the world : "They have called the people happy, that hath these things."[3] Oh, how we are deceived ! Not to speak of the fact, that these unfortunate goods generally deprive those who possess them of eternal happiness, and ruin their souls forever ; for, for one who saves his soul by the esteem in which he is held, there are thousands who are damned through the very same cause ; for one who gains Heaven by riches, there are thousands who

[1] Præterit figura hujus mundi.
[2] Tunquam memoria hospitis unius diei prætereuntis. Sap. v. 15.
[3] Beatum dixerunt populum, cui hæc sunt.—Ps. cxliii. 15.

lose it; for one who indulges his senses and still saves his soul, there are countless others whom the same indulgence hurls into hell. Oh, what bad men of business we are! We give ourselves so much trouble about those things, and do not think of that good which alone contains true happiness. If instead of plaguing ourselves so much about the world, we had visited the Child in the stable of Bethlehem, like the three holy kings, we should certainly have found real happiness.

In Jesus alone is true happiness to be found.

Jesus, my dear brethren, is the only good, in and with whom the star of happiness always remains. "It rested over where the Child was."[1] "To rejoice in Thee, and on account of Thee, that is to live truly happy."[2] You may seek for another happiness, another life, I can find none but this, says St. Augustine. Jesus is the only true and supreme good, in whom all imaginable goods are comprised, in their fullest perfection, without end or limit, fault or flaw. St. Ambrose says: "Christ is all things to us."[3] Thy honor, oh, proud man, will not feed thee! Thy money, oh, miser, will not give thee a good name! Thy vile pleasures, oh, libertine, will not bring thee money! Thy wine, oh, drunkard, will not clothe thee! "Christ is all things to us." He is a certain good that I may possess; I may enjoy His friendship and love at all times, how, when, and as long as I wish. If I have property in my possession, I am lord and master over it, but I am prevented by a higher power from doing all that I wish with it: I may be a very rich man, but I cannot use my wealth while I am asleep; I may have good things to eat, but once my stomach is full, the least bit of food disgusts me; I may have a right to an inheritance of a thousand ducats, but, if my right is to be shared with a hundred others, I shall get only a very small portion. But none of these things can stand in my way, if I possess Jesus, the highest good, by being in the state of grace. Not violence, because nothing but my own will can deprive me of God; not sleep, for during sleep I am still the friend of God, and am beloved by Him; not enjoyment, for, the more I know and love Jesus, the greater will be the joy and sweetness I shall receive from Him; not the sharing Him with others, for Jesus is an immense and infinite good. Although the saints in Heaven possess Him, yet my share in Him is none the less therefore. Finally, Jesus is a lasting and constant good, with whom I can gain eternal joys

[1] Supra, ubi erat puer.

[2] Ipsa est ista beata, gaudere in te, gaudere propter te ipsa est et non altera.

[3] Omnia Christus est nobis.

and endless wealth. "They shall perish, but Thou remainest."[1] If Heaven and earth were to pass away, Thou, oh, Lord, wouldst still remain to me. "Happy," indeed, "is that people whose God is the Lord."[2] Oh, more than happy, oh, only happy souls, who seek and find Jesus!

When is, however, least thought of by blind mortals.

Alas! how then can we be so blind as to attach such little importance to this supreme good? How can we grub in the earth like moles, and seek God so little, and think so little of losing Him? If we find a small piece of money in the street, our heart leaps for joy; if we find God by grace, we hardly think anything of it. The loss of a few shillings will often force the tears from our eyes; we can lose Jesus and all good with Him, by sin, and never shed a tear. In fact, we do that deliberately every day, and laugh at it. If I say to a vindictive man, forgive your enemy, or you will lose Jesus; to an injust man, give back what does not belong to you, or you will lose Jesus forever. Oh, they would say scornfully, is that all? That is a small loss. If, on the other hand, I were to say to such people, forgive, or you will be hanged on a gibbet; leave that sinful company, or you will become stone blind; give back those ill-gotten goods, or you will be reduced to the extreme of poverty. Oh! that would be quite another matter; then my threats would at least deserve serious consideration. So much is thought of the loss of temporal things, so little of the loss of eternal things. If I ask another, a merchant, for instance, who may otherwise be a good Christian, why are you so downcast and melancholy? Oh, what an unhappy man I am, he would say; a man who owed me a hundred thalers has absconded. Be satisfied, I would answer, he has not taken away Jesus from you, and in Him you have all good. Yes, he would answer, that is very true, but I have lost my hundred thalers all the same. If I ask a tradesman, why are you so sad? I have no bread for my children, would be his reply; or a widow, why do you weep: oh, my poor husband is dead, would be her answer. Be comforted, Jesus is still your friend, and in Him you have all you can desire. Very true, they would both think, but that is a poor consolation; I wish I had some bread for my children, I wish my husband were still alive. Behold, oh, my dear Saviour, so little do people value Thy friendship! So strongly are they attached to temporal things, that their affections are drawn away from Thee!

[1] Ipsi peribunt, tu autem permanes.—Ps. ci. 7.

[2] Beatus populus, cujus Dominus Deus ejus.—Ps. cxliii. 15.

Conclusion, to seek and to preserve Jesus alone and His friendship.

Away, then, with all the trumpery of the world! Thus should each Christian soul among you resolve with me. I will henceforth seek Jesus alone, and will love Him alone, above all things. Let others heap up earthly goods, I will be content with Jesus, poor though He may be. Let who will seek honors and esteem, the humble Jesus is sufficient for me. Children of the world, you may depend on your inheritance; for my part, I will say with David: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance."[1] Jesus alone is enough for me! When I have Him, I have everything, and I can afford to despise all things else. When you have striven in vain for many years for your desired happiness, I will certainly have found mine; while you suffer sorrow and care on account of your goods, I shall possess my God in the joy of my heart and the peace of my conscience. Your happiness will leave you after a short time; mine, that I am now about to seek, cannot be taken from me even by death. You will sleep the sleep of the rich, and will have nothing in your hands; when I die with Jesus, whom I love, I shall possess eternal life. You will say, in eternity, when it shall be too late, what good is our money, our honor, our pleasure to us now? "Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us,"[2] the star of happiness has never shown itself to us! Then I will rejoice with my God, and exult. I may have had nothing during life: what harm is it now that I have been poor, despised and crucified with Jesus? Oh, most merciful Saviour! why have I not thought of this before? why have I not sought Thee earlier? Ah, wretched me! I have lost Thee before now, and have cast Thee off for the sake of some worthless thing! It would have been far better for me to have lost everything, than to have lost my supreme good by sin. Henceforth, nothing shall be so dear and so precious to me as to separate me from Thee. I say with the Spouse of the Canticles: "I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him, and I will not let him go."[3] Take away from me, oh, my God, all consolation, joy, temporal goods, friends, parents, I shall regard their loss as nothing; provided only that I have Thee for my friend, and that I love Thee and possess Thee alone, then I shall have happiness enough. Amen.

[1] Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ.—Ps. xv. 5.
[2] Ergo erravimus a via veritatis, et lumen justitiæ non luxit nobis.—Sap. 5. 6.
[3] Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum, nec dimittam.—Cant. iii. 4.

EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE SINS OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

The sin of a Christian is greater and more inexcusable than that of a Jew or a heathen. 1st. On account of the greater lights and helps that he receives from God. 2d. On account of the stricter obligation he is under to serve God more holily.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Nisi abundaverit justitia vestra plus quam Scribarum et Pharisæorum, non intrabitis in regnum Cœlorum.—Matth. v. 20.

"Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Introduction.

Oh, my God, what do I hear? Is it sufficient to exclude a Christian eternally from the kingdom of Heaven, that he is not more just and perfect than the Scribes and Pharisees, that is to say, those who were looked upon by the Jews as the highest patterns of justice? What kind of damnation, then, awaits those who, instead of living holier and more perfect lives, live more impiously and irreligiously, than in former times under the Old Law, the Pharisees, Jews, and heathens? That is, however, my dear brethren, the complaint that may be justly made in our times. It would not be difficult for me to prove that the vices of the Pharisees are found amongst Christians, in a far worse degree and more frequently; that is to say, that Christians are prouder, more hypocritical, more avaricious and unjust than the Pharisees were. But I will not confine my subject within such narrow limits as to render it applicable only to one or another of you. I shall seek a wider field, and prove what is applicable to all of us, that a sin committed by a Christian under the New Law is greater and more inexcusable than the same sin would be, if committed by a Jew or a heathen.

Plan of Discourse.

Certainly the sin of a Christian is greater and more inexcusable than that of a Jew or a heathen, on account of the greater light

and helps he receives from God. That will be the first point. Greater and more inexcusable is the sin of a Christian than that of a Jew or a heathen on account of the stricter obligation he is under to serve God more holily. That will be the second point.

Therefore, if we wish to enter Heaven before the Pharisees, the impious must hasten to arouse themselves to repentance and sorrow for their sins, and good Christians must conceive a still greater horror of sin. Oh, merciful God! grant us both these graces, through the merits of Blessed Virgin Mary, and the intercession of the holy angels.

First Part.

He who falls in clear daylight, is less deserving of pity, than he who falls in the dark night.

Imagine to yourselves, my dear brethren, that there are two people walking in the same icy, slippery street, in winter time, the one during the night, and with bad sight too, without staff or leader, following the misty light of a small lantern that is borne before him to show him the way; the other in clear daylight, with good sight and a good staff in his hand; the first stumbles and falls, the second, while he keeps staring around him, falls also, and both break a leg. What would you think of this accident? Both are to be pitied, no doubt, but which of them deserves the greater pity? Oh, certainly, you would say, the first poor, unfortunate fellow: for it is no wonder that he fell on the slippery ice, in the dark night, with no light but that of a small lantern to guide him. And what would you think of the other? Oh, he may thank himself for his misfortune; why did he stare around so? He should have looked where he was going, and have used his stick; or if he saw a dangerous place ahead he should have avoided it. It is his own fault that he fell; he is not so deserving of pity as the first. Such must be the judgment of every one who rightly considers the case.

A Christian has more light and knowledge than Jews and heathens formerly had.

See there, my dear brethren, the difference between the sin of a Christian under the New Law, and of a Jew or infidel under the Old Law. No matter who we are, we must all, according to the end of our creation, travel the same road to eternal happiness. In former times, Jews and heathens wished to go to Heaven, just as we Catholics do now, and the way thither is not less slippery, difficult, and dangerous for us, than it was for them. It is true that no one was ever without the light necessary to distinguish good from evil, nor without the divine assistance necessary to enable him to avoid dangers, and to save himself from a fall; and therefore I will not patronize the Jews and heathens so far as to say that they could not be blamed for living a bad life and

committing sin; if they did so, it was their own fault, and a just God could always say to them, "Thy perdition is from thyself, oh, Israel."[1] Still, there is a great difference between light and light, between helps and helps. What a small, flickering candle, so to speak, was borne before the former in the dark night, while a clear day and the full blaze of the sun is shining on us Christians! How sparingly and how seldom did they receive the means and opportunities of learning, knowing, and doing good, how lavishly and how often those helps are given into our hands, and how much easier we can recover ourselves after a fall into sin, than they could!

Therefore the sin of the Christian is less to be excused than that of the others.

And with regard to the light, could not a heathen or a Jew excuse himself, to a certain extent, on the day of judgment, by pleading his ignorance and saying: I have wandered, oh, Lord, from the way of justice, and sinned against Thy holy Law, but I did not know any better at the time; Thou hast certainly taught me Thy Law and Thy eternal truths and Thy divine mysteries by Thy prophets and in Thy written Word, but they were all hidden under dark shadows. I was taught by hidden figures and parables, which I did not understand, and I had hardly any one to explain them to me. But how could I plead ignorance as an excuse for my sins, and say that I did not know enough? I, a Catholic Christian, who have been taught all these truths, not by figures and mystic prophecies, but by the clear Word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, interpreted according to its true sense and meaning by an infallible Church, explained by so many holy Fathers and Doctors, and rendered so easy for my intelligence and appreciation by so many sermons and instructions, just as food is prepared for a child to eat; and I am besides encouraged, and almost forced to observe this Gospel and to live according to it, by so many warnings and exhortations, by the reading of good books, by the examples of the saints, and by the daily meditation of the lifes of good Christians around me. How could I, a Christian, if I go astray, plead ignorance as an excuse, since the way is thus smoothed before me, and I have nothing to do but what I can see plainly before my eyes, while I have Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to go in front and lead me onward; so that my task is, simply, to do my best to imitate His life, which is proposed to all Christians as a pattern, and which is the infallible and only way to Heaven? Oh, certainly not! "They have no excuse for their sin."[2] So said Christ formerly of the Jews; much more could He say it, nowadays, of us Christians, who re-

[1] Perditio tua exte, Israel! [2] Excusationem non habent de peccato suo.—John xv. 22.

ceive so many lights. What Salvianus says is more than true: "We sin, not through ignorance, but through a perverse and rebellious will."[1] "We are not merely transgressors, like the Jews, but we also contemn and scoff at the Law of God;"[2] as the same holy man says. Like obstinate and disobedient servants, who know their master's will and do not fulfil it, when we commit sin, our guilt is greater and more difficult to be excused.

The sin of pride still more inexcusable.

To descend to particulars, with regard to these sins, my dear brethren, what wonder was it that, in the Old Law, the Pharisees were exalted in their own opinion and esteemed themselves better than the common people? They had as yet known nothing, or at least believed nothing, of the Son of God emptying Himself, and taking the form of a servant, and coming, not to be ministered to, but to minister; they had not seen this Incarnate God, who had hidden Himself away in a lowly hut, amongst chips and shavings, as a poor workman's apprentice, despised and unknown; they had not seen Him stooping down to wash the feet of a few poor fishermen, and laughed at and mocked as a fool and a sinner by a rabble crowd, and shamefully done to death on the cross, through love for man. They had never heard, and perhaps never will hear the words of the lowly Saviour: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart,"[3] "He who is the greatest amongst you shall be the servant of the rest," etc. Here, again, I must say that I do not wish to defend the pride of the Pharisees; I mean simply to show that the pride of a Christian is far more inexcusable; for, as St. Bernard says, what is more intolerable, shameless, and culpable, than for a Christian, who sees and knows by faith how the great God of Heaven and earth humbled Himself, to strive for honor and a great name? "What more shameless impudence can there be, when infinite Majesty humbles Itself as a worm,"[4] according to the words of the Lord Himself,[5] "than for a wretched mortal, a poor worm of the earth, to become puffed up with pride?"

Vindictiveness.

It was more tolerable and more to be excused in a Jew, if he could not forget or forgive an injury. For, in those days, what heroic example had men seen to encourage them in that respect? They thought that the law obliged them to love their friends, but

[1] Non inscitia, sed rebellione peccamus.

[2] Et contemptores pariter et prævaricatores sumus.

[3] Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde.—Matth. xi. 29.

[4] Intolerabilis impudentia est, ut, ubi se exinanivit Majestas, vermiculus inflетur et intumescat.

[5] Ego autem sum vermis, et non homo.

not their enemies. They took, as their chief maxim, that imaginary law of which Christ afterwards said: "It was said to the ancients, thou shalt hate thy enemy,"[1] "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." And therefore, when they afterwards saw the first Christians, they looked upon them with astonishment. See, they said, how these men love one another; what extraordinary people they are! But a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, brought up in the school of the cross, who so often hears from the lips of his master the words: "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you," etc.;[2] a Christian, who knows well that his Lord and God suffered on the cross for those who tortured and murdered Him, how could such a one palliate or excuse his secret spite and hatred, his vindictiveness and jealousy, when he tries to supplant his neighbor, his cursing and calumny when he gives expression to his bitter hatred against his fellow man? Oh, I could well say, that what was a sin for the Jews is a double sin for Christians.

Sensuality.

Is it wonderful that, in former times, a heathen or a Jew should surrender himself to impurity, sensuality, gluttony, or drunkenness? Such is the question that Tertullian puts to those who, in his time, appealed to the Old Law to palliate and excuse their self-indulgence. In the Old Law there was nothing known of perpetual chastity, and perpetual virginity was looked upon as a disgrace to a family; even the most holy men were allowed a plurality of wives. "Let the flesh have its way, before the coming of Christ," answered Tertullian. "It was not yet worthy of such a great gift as that of chastity;"[3] because it was not yet purified by the Incarnate Word of God, nor washed in His Blood by Baptism and thus raised to a more pure and perfect life. It had not yet been adorned with those glorious titles; "it had not yet been called the body of Christ, the members of Christ, the house of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost."[4] And all these titles now belong to our bodies, since God was born of an Immaculate Virgin and clothed himself with our flesh. Therefore the Apostle warns us so energetically that we must hold our bodies in the highest honor, and treat them as becomes the Body of Christ, and that we must not even name sins of impurity, or dishonor by one bad thought, a body that is sanctified by and through

[1] Dictum est antiquis; odio habebis inimicum tuum

[2] Ego autem dico vobis: diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos," etc.—Matt. v. 44.

[3] Luserit ante Christum caro, imo perierat; nondum erat dignus dono salutis.

[4] Non Corpus Christi, non membra Christi, non templum Dei vocabatur.

Christ. If now the old written Law, nay, even the natural law, considers sins of impurity as so grievous, that, on their account, an angry God destroyed whole cities and countries, like Sodom and Gomorrha, and deluged the whole earth and drowned every human creature on it, except a few just souls, and condemned the majority, if not all of them, to hell forever; how abominable, intolerable, and inexcusable in the eyes of God must not the impurity of a Christian be, who is a member of Christ, and a temple of God? And that vice is so common among Christians nowadays, and all the more inexcusable. "They have no excuse for their sin."[1]

The scandal given by immodesty in dress.

If the Jewish women dressed in such a vain, frivolous and indecent style, as is now the diabolical custom in many Christian towns, there might have been some little excuse for them; for they knew nothing of the poor, lowly, humble, and holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor of the woe that He announces: "Woe to the man by whom scandal cometh;"[2] no matter how the scandal may be given. Nor did they know anything of the new fashion that the Apostles, Peter and Paul, introduced amongst Christian women. St. Paul writes: "I desire, therefore, that women dress in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty"—mark these words—"and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold or pearls."[3] How St. Paul would have thundered forth, if he saw the fashions of the world in these days, which cause those who are modest and wish to preserve pure hearts to close their eyes! Oh, Salvianus! cry out again, so that the whole of Christendom may hear you: "We sin not through ignorance, but through a perverse will."[4] We Christians, when we sin, no matter what the vice may be, do not sin through ignorance, but with a deliberate, perverse, and rebellious will. We are not to be excused; our light, our knowledge is too great.

Less to be excused on account of the many graces and helps to do good.

Besides all this, we have so many helps and opportunities to avoid evil, do good and save our souls. Poor people! I sometimes think, poor people, who formerly lived in Judaism or heathenism, how ill off you were, compared to us Christians! Your sacraments were only a shadow, a figure of ours, and from them you received the grace of God drop by drop, while we can receive it now, if we wish, like a rushing torrent. If one of you had offended

[1] Excusationem non habent de peccato suo.

[2] Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit.

[3] Mulieres in habitu ornato, cum verecundia et sobrietate ornantes se, et non in trotis crinibus, auro et margaritis—I. Tim ii. 9.

[4] Non inscitia, sed rebellione peccamus.

God grievously, he had no other means of gaining eternal happiness but perfect charity, and repentance, and sorrow, along with suffering the terrible punishments generally inflicted on sin; while we can be absolved from our sins so easily in the Sacrament of Penance, and may be freed by indulgences from the punishment due to them. You had nothing, as a sacrifice of atonement for sin, but the flesh of rams and goats (what a wretched offering!); while we have the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ, an infinite Sacrifice, to offer daily to the Eternal Father, on the altar. For you the Lord, as a stern judge, had an iron rod always ready in His hand, when a more serious crime was, generally speaking, immediately followed by the terrible punishment of eternal death; while He deals with us like a mother, who will take the rod in her hands twenty times to threaten, but hardly once to strike. In a word, you were treated as servants and slaves of God, we have the great honor, as the Apostle says, "that we are brethren of Christ, that we are called, and are children of God."[1] But, precisely on this account, I must look at the matter in another light, and say: miserable, wretched Christians! why should you not live holier and love your God more than the Jews and heathens did? How much more inexcusable you are, how much more deserving of punishment, when you deliberately offend your God! So it is, my dear brethren, a single sin, committed by us Christians, makes a deeper wound in the Heart of our heavenly Father than twenty sins of a Jew or heathen, on account of the greater lights and helps that we receive from God. The same is to be said also on account of the stricter contract that we have made with God, to serve Him more holily; as we shall see in the—

Second Part.

An injury inflicted by a friend is worse than that inflicted by an enemy.

Much greater and more hurtful is the injury that I, undeservedly and without cause, suffer from a dear friend, who has sworn constant love and fidelity to me, than that which I suffer from a stranger, who has nothing in common with me, except that we are fellow men. And that is self-evident. What wonder is it that a sovereign is often attacked by foreign foes! That is nothing new, nor is it by any means an intolerable thing, although it may often be done in support of injustice. But, if he were attacked by his own subjects, after they had acknowledged him as their lawful ruler appointed by God, and had sworn allegiance to him; if he were attacked by his own officers and soldiers, after

[1] Ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.

they had taken the oath of fidelity, that would be a crime deserving, not of one, but of two or three deaths; because, along with the injustice, there is the wickedness of contempt, disobedience, perjury, and rebellion. Much more grievous and painful is the injury suffered by a husband, who finds another in unlawful intercourse with his wife, than if he found him committing the same sin with his sister or daughter. And why? Because his wife has sworn to give him alone her heart, and has given over herself to him next after God, in the Sacrament of Matrimony. So that, in addition to the crime of impurity, there is also that of injustice and adultery.

A Christian has sworn a special oath of fidelity to God, which Jews and heathens do not do.

It is true, my dear brethren, that all men, no matter who they are, even Jews and heathens, owe to their Creator a most submissive obedience, respect, and love. No one is excused from this or dispensed from it, in the least. This duty is enforced by nature itself. St. Augustine says, "Heaven and earth cry out to us, that we must love thee, oh, Lord."[1] But it is also true that a Christian is more bound by this duty than other men. And why? Because he, in addition to the obligation incumbent on all men and enforced by nature itself, has bound himself, by a special and a higher title, to the constant love and service of his God. Think, Christians, of the irrevocable contract that you have made with God in holy Baptism, in which He promised to consider you as His children, and you undertook to give Him due honor and obedience, as your Father. You then publicly, and in presence of witnesses, protested, with a solemn oath, that you would have nothing to do, during your whole lives, with the devil and his pomps and vanities, or with the flesh or the corrupt usages of the world, and that you would always remain faithful to your God. "I renounce,"[2] were the words you used, I renounce all that is not pleasing to God. No allegiance of peasants to their landlord, or of soldiers to their general, no contract between married people, has such strength or obligatory power, as this Baptismal contract. Hence, the holy Fathers call Baptism, sometimes, a levying of soldiers, in which men are enrolled under the banner of Christ to fight unceasingly against the enemies of God, and sometimes a spiritual marriage between the soul and its heavenly Bridegroom, in which the Christian gives his whole heart and love to God alone forevermore. This contract is strengthened by subsequent confessions and communions, although not in express words, yet

[1] Cœli et terræ clamant, Domine, ut amemus te. [2] Abrenuntio.

implicitly it is ratified, approved of, and renewed. You may easily see that no Pharisee, or Jew, or heathen, ever made such a contract with God.

Therefore the sins of Christians are more grievous.

And yet if any of these latter transgressed the divine Law, they were not to be excused and were deserving of the eternal punishment of hell. How enormous, then, must your sin be, oh, Catholic Christian! When you sin, you do not merely despise the command of God, like a Jew or a heathen, but you also commit a spiritual adultery, and you are guilty of perjury and rebellion against your rightful Lord, to whom you have, in a special manner, solemnly and publicly sworn eternal fidelity. Oh, what a terrible thing it is, says the Lord Himself, by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "Shall he prosper and gain his salvation, who does such things?"[1] "Shall he go unpunished, who has violated a contract?"[2] Salvianus, speaking of plays, comedies, and ballots, in which holy purity is violated, or at least endangered, says that it is a sin for a heathen or a Jew to be present at such things, but not near so great a sin as it would be for a Christian; for, if the former is induced thereby to sin against purity, he does not, at all events, profane the holiness of the Sacrament, as we should do; nor would he, like us, act against his promise, so that he would not be guilty of perjury, as we should be. But for a Christian, who has publicly renounced Satan and his works, and given himself soul and body to God, to imitate heathens in this matter, for a Christian to commit grievous crimes, that is no ordinary violation of the divine Law; it is a spiritual apostasy, an idolatry, an adultery, and a denial of God. What are we Christians thinking of? "What excuse can we make for our sins? We make open profession of the gift of salvation, and at the same time deliberately deny it. Where is our Christianity?"[3] Have we sworn fidelity to God in the Sacrament, only to make our sins more grievous and inexcusable! Thus far Salvianus.

Hence the sins of Christian are more deserving of condemnation.

In truth, my dear Christian brethren, if Jews and heathens are damned on account of their sins, as the Lord declares in the Gospel of St. John: "They have no excuse for their sin,"[4] what has an impious Christian to expect, who enjoys such perfect light, such frequent helps and graces, such a close connection and relationship with God? If it is true, according to the infallible

[1] Numquid prosperabitur, vel salutem consequetur, qui fecit hæc.—Ezech. xvii. 15.

[2] Qui dissolvit partum numquid effugiet.

[3] Nos quid respondere pro nobis possumus? Confitemur munus salutis pariter et negamus. Ubi est Christianitas nostra?

[4] Excusationem non habent de peccato suo.—John. xv. 22.

words of God Himself, that we cannot enter Heaven, unless our justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, what kind of a Heaven can we expect, or rather, what sort of hell awaits us, if we are not merely not more perfect and just, but even more vicious and sinful than they? St. Augustine supplies me with an apt simile here, when he compares Christians to the branches of the vine, and Jews and heathens to the oak and beech trees of the forest. Which wood is better and more precious? Certainly, he answers, as long as both are green, the vine is more valuable than the forest trees, because it produces a valuable and agreeable fruit; while the latter can bring forth nothing but green leaves that are of very little use. But, cut down the oak and beech, and place them on one side, and the vine and place it on the other; if you had your choice then, which wood would you prefer? Without any hesitation you would take the former, although it is only forest wood. And why? Because, you think, that wood can be of some service, when it is cut and planed: you can make chairs and tables or anything you will out of it. But what is the vine good for, when it is cut down? You cannot even make a wooden nail out of it, it is only fit for the fire. Such is the difference, says St. Augustine, between Christians and infidels. A good, pious Christian is a branch that grows on the vine, which is Christ: "I am the vine and you are the branches."[1] As long as he is united to Christ, he brings forth good fruit, that is pleasing in the sight of God; he does more for the honor and glory of God than all Jews and infidels together, for they only bring forth green and useless leaves in the forest. On the other hand, a wicked Christian, as soon as he cuts himself off from the vine by a mortal sin, is far worse and more useless than an infidel. Why? Because, when he is enlightened by the grace of faith, the Lord can make him into a vessel of honor in His house, that is in the Church, to show His power and goodness; but a false Christian, a Christian only in name, who lives according to the world and the flesh, is a disgrace to the House of God; so that, being cut off from the vine, if he does not repent, he is good for nothing but hell-fire. "If he is not on the vine, he will be in the fire,"[2] are the words of St. Augustine. Such is the threat of Our Lord, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west," and will condemn you, for they have led better lives with less light and grace than you, and many of them will one day

[1] Ego sum vitis, vos palmites.—John. xv. 5. [2] Si in vite non est, in igne erit.

enter the kingdom of Heaven.[1] "But the children of the kingdom," who had a right to heaven by belonging to the true Church, "will be cast out into the exterior darkness."[2]

Conclusion and resolution of amendment

Ah, my dear brethren, let us often think of the high dignity to which we are raised! We are Christians, and that is a great honor and glory for us; but, at the same time, it imposes on us a very strict duty and obligation to serve God all the more holily. We are Christians, and that is a great grace and privilege for us, that a merciful God has freely bestowed on us in preference to so many thousands; but it is, at the same time, a cause of deeper damnation to us, if we dishonor this holy name by a bad life. We are Christians, that is to say, brethren and members of Jesus Christ, sworn to Him in holy Baptism, and servants and children of God; woe to us, if we deprive ourselves of this great happiness by sin, and make ourselves slaves to the devil. Let us think of this in all temptations, allurements, and occasions to sin, and say at once in our hearts: I am a Christian! Far be it from me, oh, God! to perjure myself before Thee; the allegiance that I have sworn Thee, I will keep forever. If I have not hitherto always kept my promise, as I must confess with shame has often been the case, I am sorry for it from my heart. I renew my vows;[3] once again I renounce the devil forever, and all belonging to him. I belong to Thee, oh, my God! and to Thee alone! I will be Thine and remain so, in order that my justice may abound more than that of the Pharisees, and that I may thus come to Thee in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

NINTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF HEARING THE WORD OF GOD IN SERMONS.

Subject.

To hear the Word of God often in sermons is necessary. 1st. For the salvation of the majority of people. 2d. It is very useful for the salvation of all.—*Preached on the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Erat quotidie docens in templo.—Luke xix. 47.
"He was teaching daily in the temple."

[1] Recumbent in regno cœlorum.—Matth. viii. 11.
[2] Filii autem regni ejicientur in tenebras exteriores.
[3] Abrenuntio.

Introduction.

Christ taught daily in the temple at Jerusalem, and yet the Jews remained, as before, hardened in wickedness, so that when the Saviour looked on the city, His eyes overflowed and He wept bitterly: "If thou hadst only known on this day,"[1] when my teaching and instruction are not wanting to thee! Oh, if Christ, the Preacher who holds the hearts and minds of all in His hands, could do no more than that with His teaching, how can I and other preachers complain that our words often produce so little fruit in the hearts of our hearers? Still it is a lamentable thing! Every Sunday and holyday we cry out, or rather, Christ does so through us; how many Christians lead better lives on that account? We have now to see the cause of that, my dear brethren. Many do not come to the sermons; many do not come as they ought; others do not listen as they ought; others do not go away from it as they ought. These four faults shall furnish matter for the next four sermons, or instructions. And it is on this matter that the fruit of all other sermons must depend; if we do not understand and practise what it teaches, no other sermon will be of any use to souls. To-day I shall commence with those who do not come to sermons.

Plan of Discourse.

To hear the Word of God often in sermons is necessary for the salvation of the majority of people. That will be the first part. It is very useful for the salvation of all. Such will be the second part.

Oh, Holy Ghost! Thou alone shouldst speak by the mouths of preachers and move their hearers. We beg of Thee, through Mary, Thy Virginal Spouse, and through the intercession of the holy angels, as dispensers of Thy graces, excite in us the necessary fervor, so that we may in future hear Thy divine Word with great desire.

First Part.

He who is ignorant must be instructed.

He who is ignorant of something that he is bound to know, is under the necessity of learning and of being taught. In the ordinary course of nature, no one is born learned. We all bring ignorance, as an effect of original sin, with us into the world; it is cradled with us and accompanies us for many years. Parents know by experience what trouble it costs them to bring up their children, until the latter are able to take care of themselves. For

[1] Si cognovisses et tu !

this reason there are universities and schools established in towns to give instruction in all kinds of arts and sciences. In one place, young people are taught Latin and other foreign languages; in another, oratory; here they can learn worldly wisdom; there, theology; here they are instructed in law; there, in fencing, dancing, singing, and music; and there is no one who would venture to enter on a profession, unless he has first been diligent in his attendance at the schools, and gone through the long and wearisome task of learning all that is necessary.

Especially in the art of living and dying well.

Now if learning and instruction are necessary for natural sciences and vain arts, how much more are they not necessary for the art of living and dying well, and in a Christian and holy manner? Are the former, perhaps, more important than the latter? asks St. Jerome: "We learn all other arts with the help of a teacher; is this of such little value that no teacher is required for it?"[1] And yet, this is the art of arts, the most important business that can engage our attention, on which our immortal soul and its eternal happiness depends; nay, it is the only business that must of necessity occupy us, the only art that we must be thoroughly acquainted with. I may not be able to speak Latin or other foreign languages, but I can go to Heaven, all the same, with my native tongue; I could even go there if I were dumb and unable to speak. I have not practised dancing or fencing, but that will not hinder my eternal happiness; there is neither dancing nor fencing in Heaven. I may have no knowledge of law, but I can find my way to Heaven. But, if I am ignorant of the one necessary science, that of leading a holy life, then all the others will not help me to save my soul. If I know and practise that science, no matter how inexperienced I am in all the others, then I am learned enough for the end of my creation.

Most men are ignorant of this science.

But, alas! how many there are who are utterly ignorant of this holy science. The greater number of Christians, even those whom the world looks upon as wise, skilful, and learned, are only beginners in the knowledge of what concerns their soul and their eternal happiness. They know very well how to live before the world, according to their station and position, but they are very ignorant as to how they are to live for Heaven; they profess, indeed, to follow the law of the Gospel, but they know very little of its different obligations, and much less as to how they themselves should live as Christians; they can instruct others in worldly business, but they are unacquainted with the very first rules and prin-

[1] Cæteras artes non sine præceptore discimus; hæc tam vilis est, ut præceptore non egeat?

ciples of the science of salvation ; for temporal matters they have a hundred eyes, for spiritual, not one that they can see clearly with. Therefore, I have reason to compare such people to monomaniacs, who are mad only in a certain thing, while they can talk for half a day on different subjects, without giving any sign of insanity ; but as soon as that point is touched upon which is the cause and origin of their madness, then it is easy to see that they are not consistent and that they have not the full use of reason. See that man, how prudent he is in the management of his domestic affairs, how careful in all he undertakes to keep himself and his family decently ; how far-seeing and skilful he is in buying, selling, and keeping accounts ; how quick he is in foreseeing dangers and losses, and how carefully he avoids them ; how diligent and attentive he is to make use of every opportunity of gain that offers : how well he knows how to deal with people, and to treat them according to their rank and position. You wonder at his prudency, his intelligence, his cleverness, his skill. But ask the same man about something that regards the future life, his soul, his salvation, or his God ; ask him what is the meaning of contempt for the world, self-denial, mortification of the flesh, poverty of spirit, the necessity of humility, continual repentance, love of the cross, patience under contradictions, union with God, contentment with divine Providence, purity of intention in all his actions, the love of his neighbor and of his enemies, hunger and thirst for justice. Ask him what does he know and think of God, whose infinite majesty is insulted by the least sin ; the strictness of His justice, which punishes the sin of a moment by an eternity of fire ; the irreparable loss caused by sin; the flight of dangerous occasions, so necessary to avoid sin ; the sincerity of the sorrow that is necessary for the forgiveness of sin ; the uncertainty of the hour of death, which will put an end to everything ; the sanctity of the commandments of God, and how he must observe them according to his state in life ; the exceeding great reward promised to the just ; the happiness of the servants of God who love Him above all things ; and many other such things which every Christian ought to know and to observe. Oh, what an idiot you will find him to be in all these things ! He will speak and judge of them as the blind man does of color, or as the monomaniac of his particular madness ; these things are unknown to him, he does not understand them. Consider his mode of life, and compare it with the commandments and rules of our faith, and you will find one mistake after another, one error after an-

other, one fall and one sin after another; as if all the things of the next life were nothing to him. And no wonder that he knows so little of them! How could it be otherwise? He never learned that science; he has not imbibed it with his mother's milk.

We have inherited this ignorance from original sin.

On the contrary, it is the lamentable condition of us all, inherited from original sin, that our understanding is darkened and blinded in the things that concern God, and our soul and its salvation; and it would remain so, if it were not enlightened supernaturally; so that, according to the Apostle, we cannot even think anything good by ourselves.[1] If he has at one time received this light, if he has known something, nay, even all about it, he has lost it all again; for it is another of our deplorable miseries in this matter, that there is nothing so easily forgotten as the art and science of divine and heavenly things, unless one keeps them always before his mind, and constantly studies and practises them. Even if he still preserves some knowledge and remembrance of them, they are kept out of his mind, his attention is distracted from them by a thousand thoughts, undertakings, and cares. If he does think of them, if his understanding is convinced of his obligation to regulate his life according to the sanctity of the Christian Law, his will still remains sluggish and inactive. And who can do all these things? he asks himself. Does he take counsel with his own nature and disposition? But that is corrupt and will lead him in quite a contrary direction. Does he ask and follow the advice of one like himself? Then it is one blind man leading another. Does he look to the customs and usages of the world for instruction? Alas! its false maxims are utterly opposed to Christ, and they are consequently lying and treacherous.

We must therefore get instruction in this matter, by listening to sermons.

So that a man of this kind, of which there are countless individuals, if he wishes to attain eternal happiness, must go to some school in which he can learn how to live piously, or will at least be induced to do so. And what sort of a school is that? One to which the Catholic Church calls her children on appointed days, and in which good Christians assemble to hear sermons and exhortations. They are public schools, and may be attended by all, great and small, rich and poor, master and servant, learned and ignorant, clergy and laity, men and women, without distinction. They are holy schools, in which only holy things, and those that lead to holiness are treated of, namely,—how we are to

[1] Non sufficientes simus cogitare aliquid a nobis quasi ex nobis. - II. Cor. iii. 5.

think, act, and labor as Christians. They are safe and certain schools, for the matter treated of in them is founded on the Word of God; the teacher who gives the instruction is the Eternal Wisdom, the infallible God Himself. If you look only at the person who stands in the pulpit and speaks, you see only a poor mortal, who is subject to the same faults and mistakes as yourselves; who, like you, is inclined to evil, who can sin like you, and who is, sometimes, even a more impious and wicked sinner than all of you together; and who, therefore, has himself need of sermons, exhortations, and warnings. But, do not forget the office he is entrusted with: in that, you will find another teacher who cannot betray you. The Apostle says, in the name of all Christians preachers: "For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors. God, as it were, exhorting by us."[1] It is God who makes use of our tongues to frighten you away from sin, to exhort you to good, and to explain to you His will. The Lord Himself says to them: "He who heareth you, heareth Me."[2] "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaketh in you."[3]

And that according to the command of God.

God could certainly instruct our ignorant understanding in good. He could spur on our sluggish will in His own Person, as He spoke in the Old Law to His prophets; but, according to the present and ordinary arrangement of His Providence, He wills that men should be taught and instructed by men, and not otherwise. Thus we see that, although our Saviour appeared to Paul to convert him, yet He sent him to Ananias, who was to teach and instruct him in what he had to do and how he was to live. This means God now makes use of so generally, that St. Augustine says that he would be guilty of rashness who would seek to be enlightened without hearing sermons.[4] Could any one hope to excuse his own ignorance, and to free himself from all the sins he commits against the duties of his state of life; to excuse and exculpate himself from the neglect of so many good works that the Christian Law requires of him, when he seldom or never hears the Word of God preached? You will say that you did not know such a thing was a sin, that you did not think you were bound to perform such and such a good work; but you ought to, and you could have learned it. Why are there so many instructions, exhortations, and sermons on Sundays and holydays in so many

[1] Pro Christo legatione fungimur. Tanquam Deo exhortante per nos.—II. Cor. v. 20.
[2] Qui vos audit, me audit.
[3] Non enim vos estis, qui loquimini, sed Spiritus Patris vestri.
[4] Non tentemus Deum, ut nolimus prædicantem hominem audire.

churches? Are they not for you, as well as for others? Would the man who has violated some law of his sovereign be excused from punishment because he deliberately absented himself when the law was being published? Would he be freed from all guilt because he says, I knew nothing about it? He should have known of it, he should have inquired; the law was publicly promulgated for all.

Consequently it is necessary for the majority to hear sermons.

It is therefore necessary to hear sermons attentively and frequently, for those who are ignorant of many matters connected with their eternal salvation, and also for those who forget these matters, or who do not think of them, or who cannot consider them with sufficient attention, because they are occupied the whole week with temporal cares. I leave it to yourselves to say, my dear brethren, whether the number of such persons is not great, nay, whether it does not even include the great majority of men of the world? On account of this necessity, the Catholic Church, although she forbids excommunicated persons from hearing Mass, even on Sundays and holydays, prevents no one from hearing sermons. And I am fully convinced that there are some in such a state that it would do them far more good, as far more necessary for them, to hear a sermon, than to hear Mass or receive Holy Communion, and perhaps their sins would be worse and more dangerous if they neglected the former, than if they neglected the latter. Even if there are many who are not in the absolute necessity of hearing sermons, in order to save their souls, yet sermons are of the greatest utility to all, as we shall see in the—

Second Part.

Very useful for those who are in the state of sin.

The frequent hearing of sermons is very useful for the salvation of all Christians, no matter who they are. It is useful to those who are in the state of sin, and to those who are in the state of grace. As far as sinners are concerned, they are compared in the Holy Scriptures to persons sleeping, according to the exhortation of the Apostle to the Romans: "It is the hour for us now to rise from sleep."[1] Imagine, my dear brethren, that you see some one buried in a deep sleep; he is wanted in a hurry to attend to some business of importance; the servant goes to his door and knocks gently, thinking that that will be sufficient to awaken his master; but it is not enough. He knocks again, but hears no movement inside, and, at last, he enters the room, draws the bed curtains aside, and lets the light shine on his master's face; but even this

[1] Hora est jam de somno surgere.—Rom. xiii. 11.

does not do. Finally, he calls out once, twice, thrice in his ear, that he must get up at once, there is an important matter to be attended to, and the latter half opens his eyes, turns on his side and falls asleep again. What is to be done now? He must be shaken and pulled about, whether he likes it or not, until he is fully awake. That is a true picture of one who is buried in the sleep of sin, who completely forgets his soul, and thinks of nothing but satisfying his unbridled desires. Sometimes a good thought knocks at his heart, to remind him that he is in a bad state; that the life he has been leading hitherto cannot end well; and yet he will not overcome himself to abandon his wicked ways. The light of the good example of the pious shines in his eyes, but it cannot make them open themselves to the necessity of amendment. His conscience warns him, it calls and cries out to him: What you are doing is not right! It is high time for you to awaken from your sleep and to adopt another mode of life. Hereupon he begins to feel disturbed, to sigh and to moan, but falls back again into his former sleep. Then the God of mercy must go to him, and knock at his heart by the living voice of His preacher, in order to rouse him thoroughly and to exhort him, as the Apostle does Timothy: "Preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season," whether it annoys or not, "reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."[1] The preacher knocks, according to divine inspiration. Sometimes he frightens the sinner by the threat of an unhappy death, of a severe judgment, of the eternal fire of hell, unless he repents. Sometimes he promises him an everlasting reward and perfect happiness in Heaven. Sometimes he makes him uneasy by describing the infinite majesty of God, who is offended by sin, and the terrible sentence of the divine justice. Or he encourages him by reminding him of the patience, mercy, and goodness of God, with which He is always prepared to receive the sinner. Sometimes he condemns the malice of past sins, or entices to good by portraying the beauty of virtue, and the peace of mind that a just man enjoys. Sometimes he cries out: "Be reconciled to God,"[2] do penance, or you are lost; restore those ill-gotten goods, leave bad company, give up impurity, avoid the proximate occasion, or you are lost; forgive your enemy, make friends with him with whom you have hitherto lived in hatred and discord, correct that bad habit of swearing and cursing, or you are lost.

[1] Insta opportune, importune, argue, obsecra, increpa in omni patientia et doctrina.—II. Tim. iv. 2.

[2] Reconciliamini Deo

Such warnings are the shortest and surest way of touching obstinate hearts (as St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom say) whom God seeks out that he may arouse them from the sleep of sin. These are the pointed arrows that strike sinners in a vital place and arouse them to penance. These are the last means that God Himself uses to draw them to Him. For, as He created all things by His Word;[1] as He has redeemed the world by His Incarnate Word; as He sanctifies man by the sacramental words; so he generally converts the sinner by no other means than His Word explained in sermons.

So many conversions have been caused by it.

To this source are to be attributed the many wonderful conversions that have taken place at all times. David, enlightened as he was, did not enter into himself, or do penance, until he heard the accusing voice of the Prophet Nathan. Josophat refused to abandon his ill-made alliance, until Jehu upbraided him. Augustine was not converted by the acuteness of his understanding, nor by his daily studies, nor by the stings of conscience, but the truth shone on him through the sermons of St. Ambrose; he was overcome and converted by them. And, my dear brethren, if we could see the most secret thoughts of all men, what surprising changes of disposition might we not mark in them? How often might we not see men going home from a sermon quite different from what they were when they came to it! How many, who thought of nothing so little as of the amendment of their lives, yet, touched by some word or other, feel the influence of some great grace from God and go home full of repentance and determination to change their lives and to live better and more piously in future!

Therefore the devil tries to keep sinners away from sermons.

This is not unknown to the crafty tempter, and therefore he tries, in every possible way, to keep those who are under his yoke, from hearing the Word of God, for fear that he might lose the game he has caught in his net. When the time comes for the sermon, he puts all sorts of difficulties in their way, he suggests all sorts of excuses and pretexts and multiplies annoyances, so as to make them hate sermons; or at least he keeps them away from those sermons which would have most effect on them. If by some unlooked-for chance they happen to be present at a sermon, in which the right matter is treated of to stir up their conscience, he often secretly tries to drag them out of the Church immediately after it has commenced. So speaks St. Cyrillus of the traitor Judas who, at the Last Supper, went away during Our Lord's dis-

[1] Fecisti omnia verbo tuo.—Sap ix. 1.

course.[1] And do you know why? he asks: "so that he might not be induced to abandon his intended wickedness, by hearing the Word of God."[2] Oh, sinner! whoever you are, do not let yourself be deceived and detained by the devil. Do not remain away from sermons, if you do not wish to persevere in that blindness that puts you in danger of eternal darkness. There is no use in looking for the divine light in any other way than that which God has generally established for the conversion of sinners, and that is the hearing His Word explained in sermons.

Sermons are also very useful for the just.

And you, just! Do you wish to be strengthened and confirmed in justice? then frequent sermons diligently. A white garment, no matter how beautiful and precious it is, can easily be soiled, it can soon lose its splendor and become defiled, unless it is often cleaned; a house, no matter how strong and massive it is, may soon become shaky, if the parts that are injured by wind and weather are not repaired; a fire, no matter how clear it burns, will soon go out, unless you keep it supplied with fuel; a living body, no matter how healthy it is, must have food and nourishment at certain times, or it will soon die. Pious and just souls! oh, what a precious, snow-white garment adorns you, since you are in the state of sanctifying grace! Yet, you sometimes fall, through weakness, negligence, and ignorance, into a thousand faults and imperfections, which, although they do not make this garment black, yet stain it each time with spots that mar its beauty and make it less pleasing in the eyes of God. The Word of God is the water, of which the Wise Man says: "He will pour forth the words of his wisdom as showers,"[3] by which the soul is cleansed and filled with a greater knowledge of the Supreme Good, and a greater hatred of evil. You are the house and dwelling-place of God,[4] according to the words of the Apostle. But, to how many storms are you not exposed, that is, daily temptations, dangers, and occasions of sin? And if these are not constantly opposed, will not the building soon fall down? The Church, in which the Word of God is explained, is the armory from which you must supply yourselves with weapons, in order to conquer the enemy of your souls and to defend yourselves against every attack. Your souls are in a healthy state; the Word of God is their food and nourishment; St. John Chrysostom says: "what food is to the body, the Word of God is to the soul."[5] If you neglect to give your

[1] Continuo exivit. [2] Ne moram faciens, et audiens verbum Dei, scelus exspueret.
[3] Tanquam imbres mittet eloquia sapientiæ suæ. -Eccli. xxxix. 9.
[4] Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos.
[5] Quod corpori cibus est, hoc animæ est divinorum eloquiorum doctrina.

souls this food, they will get wearied in the service of God, will grow cold and will die through want of strength. You seem to be all on fire with the love of God; but no matter how burning this love is, it stands in need of fresh fuel. Where can that be had, if not in sermons? The Lord says: "Are not my words as a fire?"[1] which enlivens devotion by the continual remembrance of the divine mysteries, and which preserves and increases the impulse of the will to good.

Therefore they are greatly to be pitied who seldom go to sermons, for fear of being made better.

And what should I think of all this, my dear brethren? Should I rejoice or fear, exult or deplore? I have certainly reason for joy, when I think of the wonderful goodness of God to us, who bestows this light, this spiritual food, so plentifully, so frequently, so generously on us, in preference to so many others. But, alas! it is this very thought which makes me fear and tremble for ourselves, since we have such little esteem for this precious grace, and neglect it so frequently. Perhaps there are many Christians nowadays, perhaps many even of those here present, to whom the words of Jeremias might be applied: "The word of the Lord is made a reproach to me and a derision all the day."[2] For, they who seldom or never hear a sermon during the month, or during six months, or even during the whole year, and some of them because they fear that their secret wounds might be touched, or their consciences aroused, or their repose troubled, are afraid of being converted, and of being induced to lead better lives. Wretched and blind people! what other means have you of being enlightened as to your salvation? and yet you deliberately shun the light, like bats and owls!

Some imagine that sermons are not necessary for them.

There are others who seldom or never come to a sermon, because they think they are wise, learned, and experienced enough. I can read it for myself in books, they say; I have heard so many already that there is no chance of my hearing anything new. Now, you should be more modest; do not be so very proud; granted that you are learned enough; I will believe it with all my heart; but is that a reason why you should not stand in need of the living, inspiring Word of God? His Spirit does not breathe everywhere and at all times, but, "it breathes where it listeth,"[3] and dispenses its graces. You can hear nothing that you have not heard already. Be it so; but I tell you, confidently, that you will hear many truths that you have not yet perhaps put in practice. You can read them in spiritual books, and perhaps

[1] Numquid non verba mea sunt quasi ignis?—Jerem. xxiii. 29.
[2] Factus est sermo Domini in opprobrium.—Jerem. xx. 8. [3] Ubi vult, spirat.

in a better style than you would hear in sermons; that may be true also, but it is one thing to read and another to hear, and it is to this latter that God has, generally speaking, given the power of moving hearts and bestowing the grace of the Holy Ghost. The rain, falling from the clouds, gives a quite different refreshment to the earth, to that which it would receive from artificial irrigation; and, in the same way, the word that God speaks to your heart, by the mouth of His servant, is much better able to produce fruit in your soul, than the thoughts which your own cleverness and ingenuity suggest to you. "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes,"[1] and do not see the deceits by which the devil tries to keep you away from the Holy Ghost!

Those who are not regular in hearing sermons.

Finally, there are others who come now and then, when the whim takes them, but not regularly. As if God were obliged to store up the light of His grace, and keep it in reserve for them, until it may happen to suit their convenience to come for it, and even then, too, it would be necessary that the subject treated of be one that is suited to the state of their souls. All sermons cannot treat of all subjects, nor can all be equally profitable to every one; it may be that there is only one sermon to which God, in His wise decrees, has attached your conversion and the sanctity of your life, and your eternal salvation; and if you wilfully neglect that opportunity, you will never, perhaps, have a similar one again. But, you think, if I miss the sermon, I will be told at home, afterwards, what it was about. That is good, and it is a work of Christian charity; but it is a different thing to hear a sermon second-hand, and to hear it yourself: the words that the preacher spoke may be repeated to you, but not the inspirations which God sends to the heart. To say the very least, such carelessness is a sign of a very indifferent appetite, of a very weak desire to hear the Word of God. If we had to do without food for a whole day, either through want, because there is no bread in the house, or because we are compelled to abstain from all nourishment, we should think it a very hard thing; and yet there are many who, through indifference, deprive their souls of nourishment on Sundays and holydays, and they think nothing of it! What wonder is it that they should continue in their sins, or in their tepidity, or in their ignorance?

They must render a strict account therefore.

Oh, what a strict account will not many Catholics have to give, because they neglected so many and such frequent opportunities of being exhorted to good! That we shall see on the day

[1] Væ, qui sapientes estis in oculis vestris. Isa. v. 21.

when the Lord will show each one how well and how wisely He acted with regard to all of us; when He will show each one the great graces He had in readiness to bestow on him, if he had heard the exhortations, not of the priest, but which God Himself uttered by the mouth of the priest. He will say to them in reproof: "How often would I have" enlightened thy ignorance in sermons, and thou didst not come to hear them.[1] In that sermon, oh, sinner, I was ready to give thee a mighty impulse to sorrow and repentance, and to save thee from thy evil habits, thy bad company, and the proximate occasion of sins; and thou wouldst not come. I had then intended, oh, tepid Christian, to make thee zealous. Vain man of the world, I had intended to inspire thee with a disgust for the worthless things of earth, and thou wouldst not come. Thou, rich man, I would have taught thee how to use thy riches for thy last end, and thou, poor man, how thou couldst have profited of thy poverty; and thou wouldst not come, thou wouldst not listen to me. Thou who art in trouble couldst have found consolation and patience in thy difficulties; thou, just man, couldst have become more pious and have reached a higher degree of glory in Heaven; and thou wouldst not, thou didst not wish; the fault is thine, not mine. Poor, unfortunate souls! who seldom or never hear a sermon, although they could do so easily enough! They bear about them one of the certain signs of reprobation, since they have no taste for spiritual food. So say the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Christ Himself, the Infallible Truth, has said: "He who is of God, heareth the Word of God;"[2] "therefore (oh, terrible conclusion!), you do not hear because you are not of God."[3] If you are not of God, you have no part in Him.

Conclusion and resolution of amendment.

Let it not be so, oh, Lord, for us! All of us, here present, hope to have a part in Thee and to possess Thee for all eternity. We thank Thee from the bottom of our hearts, that Thou hast bestowed so much light on us, in preference to so many others. We wish to receive this light, whenever it is offered to us. We shall seek it regularly on the usual days, by hearing Thy divine Word, unless absolute necessity prevents us. Do Thou speak to our hearts, Thy servants will hear Thee. Let Thy Holy Spirit suggest those words to Thy preachers which Thou knowest to be good for our souls, and grant us to hear them in such a way that they may not be fruitless in us. Amen.

[1] Quoties volui, et noluisti.—Matt. xxiii. 37.
[2] Qui ex Deo est, verbum Dei audit. [3] Propterea vos non auditis quia ex Deo non estis.

Another Introduction for Whit-Monday.

Text.

Venit lux in mundum, et dilexerunt homines magis tenebras, quam lucem.—John iii. 19.

"The light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light."

Introduction.

The light had come into the world, and yet men were still in the darkness of night. And why? Because they loved the darkness and closed their eyes to the light. The light of the Holy Ghost is also, in our days, frequently offered in Christian exhortations and sermons, by the explanation of the Word of God, but there are, comparatively, very few who are enlightened and improved by it. Why? Because many hate this light and seldom come to hear a sermon. Many seek for the light, and are diligent in hearing the Word of God, but they derive little profit from it, because they do not hear it as they ought. The desire of remedying these two evils has impelled me, my dear brethren, to exhort you to hear sermons frequently, and to explain to you how you may hear them with profit. I shall speak to-day of the first point, and I say—*continues as before.*

TENTH SERMON.

HOW ONE SHOULD GO TO SERMONS.

Subject.

One should go to sermons—1st, with a heart well-prepared; 2d, with speedy steps.—*Preached on the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Duo homines ascendebant in Templum, ut orarent.—Luke xviii. 10.

"Two men went up into the Temple to pray."

Introduction.

Two men went to the same place, the Temple of God; they went with the same intention, to pray; but how differently they carried it out! The one was a Pharisee, who was looked upon as

a pattern of piety; the other a Publican, a public sinner, whose wicked life was known to all. The one was full of secret pride, the other, of humility and contrition. The one went to extol himself in his prayer, and to raise himself above others; the other to repent of his sins, and to beg the mercy of God. What wonder is it that they both left the Temple in very different states? "This man went down into his house justified, rather than the other."[1] A picture, my dear brethren, of many Christians, who go into the same Church, at the usual time, to hear the same sermon; but all of them do not return home in the same state. If there are ten of them who derive great profit for their souls, there are fifty who derive much less, and a hundred who have no profit at all. One sinner is touched and moved to penance, another remains as hardened as he was before. One just man is made more zealous in the service of God, the other remains as he was. One poor unfortunate gets consolation and courage, the other is just as discontented as ever. The one understands, knows, and fulfils the truth preached to him, the other is not at all enlightened by it. Whence arises this difference amongst men of the same nature, who hear the same Word of God, preached at the same time, and in the same place? The fault lies with themselves: they do not come to the sermon in the same way and with the same dispositions. To remedy this great defect, I will tell you, in to-day's instruction, how you must go to a sermon in order to profit by it.

Plan of Discourse.

One should go to sermons—1*st*. *With a heart well-prepared. The first point.* 2*d*. *With speedy steps. The second point.*

I rely upon the help of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels.

First Part.

The seed produces fruit according as the ground is prepared.

If you wish to hide a treasure in the ground, you must set to work in a very different manner to that in which you would prepare to sow seeds. He who thinks of hiding a treasure, does not consider the nature of the ground, whether it is free from stones, or full of them; whether it is hard or soft; fruitful or unfruitful; he looks to nothing else, but to making the hole deep enough, that his treasure may not be discovered and stolen. On the other hand, he who sows seed must first carefully prepare the

[1] Descendit hic justificatus in domum suam ab illo.

ground: for the seed will bring forth little or much fruit, or no fruit at all, according as the ground is ill or well prepared, or altogether unprepared.

The seed is the Word that God plants in the hearts of those who hear it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ uses the same simile in the Gospel of St. Luke, when He speaks of the Word of God: "The seed is the Word of God."[1] This is sown by sermons: not the ears, but the hearts of the hearers are the ground in which it is sown, in order to bring forth abundant fruit of eternal life for souls. But, no matter how powerful and impressive this Word may be, the whole profit and advantage of it depends mostly on the preparation and disposition of the heart that is to receive it. Not the preacher, as I said before, but God is the sower, who speaks by the mouth of His preacher and distributes His graces to hearts. Oh, there is no doubt about it! It is neither I, nor any one else, who does the good. Thou, oh, Lord! Thou must do it: "Neither he who planteth is anything, nor he who watereth, but God who giveth the increase."[2] Sermons may be as polished, as well conceived, as impressive as you wish, but if the Spirit of God does not enlighten the hearers with supernatural light, those sermons will be as incapable of producing an effect, as ice-cold water is of making a fire burn brighter. The voice of the preacher goes no farther than the ears of his hearers; it has then done its duty, and it comes back again, while the voice of God forces its way into the depths of the heart. We may cry out and shout, and make a great noise, in exhorting you to good, St. Augustine says: "If there is no one to teach inwardly, all the noise we make is of no use."[3] There are always two preaching together: besides him whom you see in the pulpit, there is another Preacher in Heaven, who with one hand directs the tongue of him who is preaching, while with the other He moves the hearts of his audience. "He has his seat in the Heavens, who teaches hearts."[4] "My tongue is the pen of a scrivener that writeth swiftly,"[5] says David, and all preachers must acknowledge it. Why does he call his tongue the pen of a scrivener? The pen may be made as well as possible, but the good writing is attributed, not to the pen, but to the writer, who knows how to make the letters neatly. So that the meaning of David is, my tongue is the pen of a scrivener, namely,—

[1] Semen est verbum Dei.—Luke viii. 11.

[2] Neque qui plantat, est aliquid, neque qui rigat, sed qui incrementum dat Deus.

[3] Admonere possumus per strepitum vocis nostræ, si non sit intus, qui doceat, inanis fit strepitus noster.

[4] Cathedram in cœlo habet, qui corda docet.

[5] Lingua mea calamus scribæ velociter scribentis.—Ps. xliv. 2.

God, who, by means of it, writes good things in the hearts of men. You also were well aware of that, oh, great St. Paul, when you wrote to the Ephesians: "Pray for me that speech may be given to me, that I may open my mouth with confidence,"[1] and that God may give me words to move hearts and to stir them up to divine love! It is on that account, my dear brethren, that we always ask the help of the Holy Ghost by devout prayer, in the beginning of a sermon; and I am certain, that if any good is done, it is oftener to be attributed to the pious prayer of some poor, humble, but holy man, who stands in self-abasement behind a pillar, than to the preacher himself.

It requires a well prepared heart.

But to return to our subject. Theologians teach that according to the present general arrangement of Providence, God bestows His lights, gifts, and graces, only on those who are ready and able to receive them; just as the sacraments themselves cause grace according to the disposition of those who receive them. It sometimes happens, as experience teaches, that an impenitent sinner, who chances to go to a sermon, without the least idea of amendment, and with some wicked and impious intention, is struck with the light of grace, moved to repentance and converted. But these are rare and extraordinary examples of the mercy of God. Let no one trust his salvation to a miracle like that. So that the first thing we must bring with us to a sermon, if we wish to profit by it, is a well-disposed and well-prepared heart.

What this preparation consists in.

And how? what does that preparation consist in? In this, that we must cleanse our hearts, like ground that we prepare for seed, from the stones that would prevent the Word from fructifying, and from the thorns that would choke it; that is to say, we must lay aside all other cares, evil desires, and thoughts, and wilful attachments to sin, and we must go to the sermon with no other wish, no other intention, but a true and earnest desire to understand the will of God, to learn the truths taught and to act according to them. If I am in the state of sin, my first wish must be to understand the deformity of sin, so that I may be moved to true sorrow and penance, and avoid evil in future. If I am in the state of grace, my only object must be to be incited more and more to the love of God, and to His service, to the esteem of virtue, and to the desire and longing for heavenly things. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."[2] What is the meaning of that? Have not all got ears who come to hear ser-

[1] Orate pro me, ut detur mihi sermo in aperitione oris mei.
[2] Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat.—Luke. viii. 8.

mons? They are not deaf, or they would remain at home. It is true, says Cardinal Hugo, that all have ears, but all have not ears to hear.[1] They who hear must have such ears that they can profit by what they hear and obey the divine will, when they understand it.

They fail in this point who come to sermons without a proper intention.

Do we bring such ears with us, my dear brethren, when we come to a sermon? Are our hearts thus prepared, our minds ready, our intentions pure, our desires earnest and sincere? Would to God that it were so! If I might ask each and every one particularly, what induced them to come to the sermon, and expect from all a true answer, how different would be the causes they would assign, and not one of them conformable to the true object of a sermon! Some could not even assign a cause; they go to the sermon, and they hardly know why or how they went; they had simply the desire of following the crowd, of keeping up a custom, of pleasing their fathers, mothers, masters, or mistresses, who ordered them to come and who watch them to see that they do so. There are many simple, good souls, who could give no other reason for their coming except that they wished to hear a sermon, thinking that when they have done that, they have performed a good, holy, and meritorious work; so that it is all the same to them whom they hear, what they hear, and how they hear; nor do they trouble themselves about the subject, for their only object is to hear a sermon, and of course every subject is good. That may be all very true, but the good work does not consist therein. If you have no other intention but that, I would not give you anything for all you could gain, even if you heard ten sermons in the one day. The hearing of sermons, in itself, is not a holy or meritorious work, it is only a means of learning holy things, so as to do something holy and good afterwards; and that is the intention which makes it good and meritorious to hear sermons.

Through curiosity or a bad motive.

And you others, why do you come now and then to sermons? Is it that you may pass away an hour or so, on Sundays or holydays, which you would otherwise find too long, as you have nowhere else to spend your time? Or is it to satisfy an idle curiosity to hear how the preacher acquits himself of his task, that you may criticise him afterwards? They say, like those people of whom the Prophet Ezechiel writes: "Come, let us go and hear what he has to say,"[2] what sort of ideas and thoughts

[1] Habent aures, sed non habent aures audiendi.

[2] Venite et audiamus, quis sit sermo egrediens.

he has; as if they were going to see a play! Poor, blind wretches! who only try to satisfy their curiosity, and seek merely for pleasure and enjoyment, where they might find their eternal salvation, and whose only object is to glut their ears, where they might feed their souls, and learn what their obligations are and how to fulfil them. I will say nothing of other still more culpable, nay, even wicked motives, that induce many to come, who have not the least idea of amending their lives; but come with the deliberate intention of opposing holy inspirations, and driving them out of their minds. What sort of profit can all those people hope to have? No one is forced to receive grace against his will; he must seek it, desire and long for it.

Therefore, all that must be mended.

I say, my dear brethren, "bring with you longing and devout hearts"[1] to the sermon! The greater your appetite, when you sit down to table, the better flavor has your food, and the more good it does the stomach. The purer your intention, the greater your desire to be instructed and moved by the Word of God, the more profit will you bring home with you. So that, first of all, before you go to a sermon, or while you are in the church before it commences, you must raise your heart to God. Think to yourself: God is now about to speak to my heart. Sigh and pray in the words of the Prophet Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."[2] Enlighten my understanding that I may know what Thou desirest from me, arouse my will that I may do what Thou willest; behold, oh, Lord! my heart is prepared, and in Thy hands. Turn it, direct it, draw it whither Thou wilt. Speak, Lord! Thou art my Lord, I am Thy servant, Thy handmaid; it is for Thee to command me in all things, and for me to obey Thee; I am here now with the intention of hearing, learning, knowing, and doing whatever is pleasing to Thee. Thy servant heareth. That is one of the things required, my dear brethren, to draw profit from sermons; to come with a well-prepared heart. The other is, to come with speedy steps, and it will be the subject of the—

Second Part.

To come too late to sermons is an irreverence towards God; this

And what is the meaning of that, you ask, to come with speedy steps? Does it mean that we must all set off running, as soon as we hear the bell ring, and rush into the church in a body? What a noise that would make in the streets, and what confusion at

[1] Afferte facies esurientes, et corda devota.

[2] Loquere Domine! quia audit servus tuus.

proved by a simile.

the church doors! No, my dear brethren, my meaning is that you must come in time to the sermon. What prevents a great many from deriving the proper fruit, is their sloth and laziness; for some make it almost a habit not to come until the sermon is begun, or even half over. What a great irreverence this is to the Word of God, what advantages it deprives them of, and what harm it does their souls, they can hardly imagine. And, in the first place, with regard to the irreverence, tell me: Do you think the master should wait for his servant? or should not the servant rather wait for his master? If the Prince sent you word last night to be in his presence this morning, at eight o'clock precisely (for he will await you at that hour, as he wishes to say something particular to you), would you neglect being there at the appointed time? Would you think, there is no hurry yet, I can sleep a quarter of an hour longer; I have still something to do at home; there will be time enough for me to get ready at eight o'clock; the Prince can wait a little until I come, or he can talk with his other attendants meanwhile? You would never dream of such things, nor let a word to that effect fall from your lips, for fear some one should hear it. Your anxiety not to come too late would drive you out of bed at four o'clock, so that you might be dressed in time, and wait half an hour in the audience chamber, before the appointed hour. But if you knew, moreover, that he sent for you to grant you a favor at the appointed time, how early and speedily you would get ready! Would you allow yourself to be delayed by any other business, no matter how short a time it might occupy? I think not; for, you would say, if I lose this favor now, I may never have such an opportunity again.

God bestows His favors in sermons.

My dear brethren, I have often told you before, that you do not come to Church merely to hear the preacher, whom you see in the pulpit; otherwise I should have spoken far too audaciously, when I brought forward the comparison of the master and servant, and it would certainly make little matter whether you came late or early; there is no use in your expecting any grace from me, I can give you none. It is the King of Heaven, the great God, who wishes to speak in and to your hearts by the voice of His instrument; it is He who calls you half an hour beforehand, by the sound of the bell, to His audience-chamber; He is there at the hour that is fixed and known to all, and He waits for His servants, to give them gratuitously certain graces, that is, either to impel them to a certain good, or to restrain them from a cer-

tain evil; and if the appointed time is neglected, these graces may never be offered again. Oh, how great are the goodness and mercy of God to us!

Ah, my dear brethren, only think of it for a moment seriously. How many populous cities and countries there are, in the four quarters of the globe, in which God seldom or never speaks to hearts or makes known His truths in this manner? How many millions of men there are amongst the heathens, Jews and heretics, who hear nothing of the mysteries of our faith? How many, even faithful Christians, there are, here and there, in out-of-the-way villages, who can sigh and complain with Jeremias: "The little ones," the afflicted, the ignorant, stretch out their hands for the Bread of the soul, in order to be comforted, strengthened, and instructed, and "there is no one to break this bread and set it before them."[1] For a long time they have been without a chance of hearing the Word of God preached. And here we have such frequent and easy opportunities! Have we merited more than they? My God, that is a secret that I cannot find out, or try to find out. It is enough for us (praise and thanks be to Thee forever) that Thy goodness pours itself out upon us, and that Thou speakest so generously to our hearts; we are not capable of valuing such graces and favors according to their worth, much less of making Thee an adequate return for them. And, my dear brethren, do we think so little of these graces, that it is no great matter to us whether we come too late or too early to receive them? We can easily imagine what they, who come late to the sermon without necessity would say, if they gave utterance to their thoughts: let God wait a while and speak with those who are there with Him; there is time enough for me; I will come presently; He can wait, and distribute His graces to others meanwhile; whatever He may have over will be good enough for me. What irreverence, what discourtesy and ingratitude to so great and good a Lord! You might make a great many excuses to an earthly prince, to explain the delay, in case you came too late; but could you hope to do anything of the kind with the Almighty God, who knows the secrets of your heart, and understands the reasons of your delay?

It is therefore an ingratitude and discourtesy toward God.

Oh, if you only had a greater love of God and of His Word, you would certainly come earlier! How quickly Magdalen ran to the door when she heard the words: "The Master is here and calls thee."[2] Hardly had St. Peter heard the words: "It is the

A want of the love of God.

[1] Parvuli, petierunt panem, et non erat, qui frangeret eis. [2] Magister adest et vocat te.

Lord,"[1] as he was sitting in the boat and saw Christ coming along the water, then he leaped overboard immediately, in order to come to Him at once. And if you, too, oh, man, knew that any one, whom you love very dearly, were at home waiting for you, love would add wings to your footsteps, that you might be there as soon as possible. And, see, whenever there is a sermon, your Lord and God is waiting for you, and you delay! And you come a quarter, or half an hour too late, while He is in the middle of His discourse! Is that a sign that you have a love and esteem for God and His Word?

Such people can derive little or no profit because they cannot understand the sermon.

And what sort of advantage do you expect to draw from such bits of sermons? None, or at least a very slight one. So that, in addition to the irreverence, discourtesy, ingratitude, and want of love towards God, there is also a loss occasioned to your soul by your coming late. Because, first of all, you are not present at the opening prayer, by which the whole congregation asks and receives the light of the Holy Ghost from Heaven; a thing that you need most of all, as I said in the beginning. And in the second place, you are not able to understand the sermon, so that it cannot give you any impulse to good. Imagine that you see two people quarrelling and fighting in the street; the dispute has been going on for some time, and at last you run up and hear how the two are shouting at and abusing each other. They speak distinctly, and you know the meaning of all the words they use, but you do not know the cause and subject of their quarrel; and so you ask one of the bystanders: What is the matter with these two men? But the only answer you get is: Why were you not here sooner, and you might have known all about it? And so you go away just as wise as you came, knowing nothing about the matter, except that two men had a quarrel. In the same way, if you come into the church during the sermon, you see some one standing in the pulpit; he is speaking of all sorts of things, according as his subject requires; he makes use of different comparisons; awakens different affections; sometimes raises his voice with a sigh to Heaven, sometimes speaks directly to his audience in tones of pity and wonder; at one time he threatens, at another entreats. And meanwhile you stand there gaping and wondering what is it all about. What is he preaching about? you think; you dare not ask any one, for fear of distracting him, and if he could tell you the subject in one word, you would still be ignorant of what has gone before, so

[1] Domine est.

that all your gaping and listening is of very little or no use to you.

Because they cannot be moved.

Again, no matter how good a sermon may be, either in form, or in the instruction it gives, or in the eloquence with which it is delivered, if it is to produce any fruit, the understanding must be convinced, by clear proofs and reasons, of the truth preached, so that the hearer may acknowledge it, and say to himself, yes, that is true, it is right to do this, or to avoid that; and then the will must be moved and excited, by appealing to the affections, in order that it may fulfil the truth; thus, one depends on the other, like the links of a chain. But, if you come too late, you hear only one part; the chain is broken, the order disturbed; and so how can the truth make the proper impression on you. Your will cannot be moved, because the understanding, which must give light to the blind will, is neither convinced nor enlightened by the proofs given in the beginning, which you have not heard. So that you go away just as wise as you came; the only thing you have gained, is to be able to say, I have heard part of a sermon; not another particle of good have you done yourself.

Because they do not come with the proper preparation.

Finally, you do not come prepared; that is, with a real desire and longing to hear the Word of God. What would you think of him who, being invited to table, would delay, without cause, until the first and best dishes were removed? You would say, there is something wrong with that man; either he has no appetite, or he is utterly indifferent to eating and drinking. Certainly, if he was hungry, he would not require to be asked a second time, nor would he wait for the signal of the bell; his stomach would give him sufficient warning, and the cook must look out, if his meal is not ready at the proper time. Is there any reason, then, to think that he has a true desire to hear the Word of God, which is the food of the soul, who, as a matter of habit, without any necessity, through sheer sloth, or because he fritters away his time in useless things, comes too late to the sermon? Oh, certainly not! The Holy Ghost says: "Teach the just man," who has a great zeal and desire for justice; "and he will hasten to receive the teaching."[1] He will not sit down in his house and wait until the last toll of the bell resounds in his ears: he will hasten, that he may have time to prepare himself beforehand by prayer, so that he may thus derive greater fruit from the sermon; he will hasten so as not to lose a single word. The whole matter depends on getting up half an hour earlier in the morning.

[1] Doce justum, et festinabit accipere.

But if some complain of the difficulty of having to stand during the sermon, and remain away (as I think some do) on that account, or come late, then I would say to them: would you think it too hard if you had to stand for an hour talking to a Prince? And if it is God who speaks to you, how can you make such a difficulty of it? You are often able to go an hour too early to the theatre, although it is not very comfortable to sit there, on account of the heat and close air. You can stand for hours looking at a juggler or a mountebank. If there is one for whom you have an unlawful affection, you can stand talking at the door with that person, for one, two, or three hours, without being tired: and when the great God speaks for the good of your souls, you think an hour too long! The great emperor Constantine, as Eusebius of Cæsarea relates, always stood when hearing sermons, because, he said, it was the Supreme Lord of Heaven who was speaking by the mouth of the preacher, and it was only right to show that mark of reverence to His Word. I do not mean, my dear brethren, that you should not sit down, if you have the opportunity of doing so; but you must not make such a difficulty of standing, if you have to stand, that you remain away or come too late on that account, and thus deprive your souls of a great advantage.

Conclusion and exhortation.

We see now how we ought to come to sermons: we must come with our hearts well prepared and full of desire to understand and fulfil the will of God; we must come with speedy steps, at the proper time, so as not to lose anything of what is said. When you hear the first sound of the bell, remember what the three holy kings said, when they saw the star: "That is the sign of a great King:"[1] come, quickly, let us go to him; God is calling us by that signal; I will go at once and hear what the Lord has to say to my heart.[2] Oh, if every one was always thus prepared and disposed, says St. John Chrysostom, what good might be done by a single sermon! What great treasures of grace the divine generosity would lavish on souls! How sinners would be filled with sorrow and repentance, the just with the love of God, the needy and distressed with spiritual consolation, the tepid with zeal, the ignorant with light, and all with devotion! Would that every one were always thus disposed! Too happy should I be, if God deigned to use me only once as an instrument to further His honor and glory and the salvation of souls! But, as it is, I must rather fear that instead of doing the good I hope for and desire,

[1] Hoc signum magni Regis est. [2] Audiam, quid loquatur in me Dominus.

I may rather be the cause why many Christians will have to render a far stricter account on the day of judgment, and have to suffer a far deeper damnation; inasmuch as through their own fault, they do not understand the will of God, nor take it to heart, nor fulfil it. But I look for consolation from you, my dear brethren. And Thou, oh, great God, who art the only Lord and Master of our hearts! who canst turn and move them as Thou pleasest! Do Thou open our mouths to announce Thy praise, Thy law, Thy truths, according to Thy will; and, at the same time, open the hearts of our hearers, that they may understand and undertake what is pleasing to Thee; so that Thy Word may profit us all to the cleansing of our souls, increasing in Thy grace, progress in Thy love, and to Thine and our greater glory forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for Sexagesima Sunday:

Text.

Qui in corde bono et optimo audientes verbum retinent.—Luke viii. 15.

"Who in a good and very good heart, hearing the Word, keep it."

How does it happen, my dear brethren, that, although the Word of God is sown so generously, although there are many hearts who receive it, yet this divine seed, generally speaking, produces such different kinds of fruit? There are many different kinds of Christians, who go to the same Church, at the usual times, etc.—*continues as before.*

Introduction.

1. One should go to sermons with a good and very good heart.
2. In good and very good time.

ELEVENTH SERMON.

HOW ONE SHOULD HEAR SERMONS.

Subject.

1st. One should hear them with continued attention and recollection. 2d. And with an earnest desire to profit by them.—*Preached on the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Adducunt ei surdum et mutum.—Mark vii. 32.
"They bring to him one deaf and dumb."

Introduction.

Miserable is the condition of the man who is deaf and dumb! He can neither make known his thoughts to others, nor hear or understand what they say to him. Our divine Lord, moved with pity, as we read in to-day's Gospel, freed one of those unfortunates from his unhappy condition, and gave him speech and hearing together. Ah, my divine Lord, Thy power is not lessened: we beg of Thee, therefore, through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother Mary and of our holy angels guardian, show the same mercy now to us! How many are deaf and dumb, nowadays, where the hearing of Thy Word is concerned! How many there are who come to sermons and hear and understand as little of them as if they were deaf! How many there are who listen to them and are yet as little capable of interpreting them for their own advantage, as if they were dumb! To remedy this twofold deplorable misery, I will, with the help of Thy grace, show how sermons must be heard, in order to profit by them. Namely—

Plan of Discourse.

One should hear them with continued attention and recollection. The first and principal point. And with an earnest desire to profit by them. The second point.

First Part.

If a great man, or any one, is speaking to us of important matters, we must be very attentive.

If all who listen to sermons were always moved by the one desire of understanding the Word of God, and the truths contained in it, and of living according to that, then I should not require to enter into a longer explanation of the first point, nor to go to any further trouble to prove it. For he who is earnestly intent on understanding the subject of the discourse and what is said about it, must, as a matter of course, be sufficiently attentive and recollected. Even in ordinary conversation, amongst men of the same condition, it is very annoying to find that the person you are speaking to allows his mind to wander, and does not pay the least attention to what you are saying. How much more annoyed would not a great man be to find his words made so little of? See how they behave who have the privilege of an audience with their sovereign; how self-restrained and reverent their de-

meanor, how attentively and eagerly they listen to every word that their Prince says to them! If, meanwhile, one of those privileged individuals were to play with his lap-dog, or to bandy jests with the servants in attendance, or even to turn his eyes and countenance away from his sovereign to look at the pictures hanging on the walls, and that while the Prince is actually speaking to him; what would you think of such conduct, my dear brethren? Is it not true that not even a simple peasant would dare to forget himself so far in such circumstances, to say nothing of a courtier, who knows how to act with his Prince? Even at table, where general conversation is allowed, if the Prince only opens his mouth to speak, oh, then immediately, every one is all attention and eagerness! Again; if I should ask a man, even of a more humble station in life than myself, advice in some important matter, for instance in a law-suit, how attentive would I not be to everything that he would say in the way of answer, advice, or explanation, and how deeply would I not imprint it all on my memory, so as to forget nothing! I make him repeat it two and three times over, so that I may understand it clearly and remember it well; for, it was on that account that I went to him. If I did not pay any attention to him, it were better for me not to have gone near him, for he would then have reason to look upon my conduct as insulting, and to think that I wished to make a fool of him.

It is God who speaks in sermons, and of very necessary things.

My dear brethren, what are we doing when hearing a sermon? For what object are we all assembled? Is it not to understand what God wishes to say in and to our souls? Could any one ever speak with us, poor mortals, who would be more deserving of reverence and respect than the great God? What is the majesty of all the kings and princes of earth, compared with Thine, oh, Almighty Monarch of Heaven?—A little crumb bestowed on them out of the infinite treasures of Thy greatness. And this is the great Lord who, as I have often told you before, speaks to our hearts by the mouth of the preacher. And what does He speak to us of? Of things that are necessary to our eternal salvation, or at least, helpful to it. He tells us, for instance, how we are to live according to the end of our creation, what we are to avoid in order to escape the eternal fires of hell, what we are to do and to shun that we may gain a victory over the enemies of our souls, who are on the watch, at all times, in all places, to betray and ruin us, how we are to increase daily our merit and our treasure for eternity, and finally, how we are to enjoy ourselves with Him in

His eternal kingdom. This is the end of all Christian sermons and instructions. Could any business be of greater importance or necessity to us? And it is for that very object that we come to sermons; at least, such is the ostensible object of our coming.

We owe Him continued attention.

Therefore it is evident that the great Lord who speaks, the important business of which He treats, and our own intention, desire, and wish, all exact from each one of us the closest attention and recollection during the sermon, so that we may know and understand what is spoken of; otherwise it would be better for us to remain away, for the very walls and benches of the church would form just as good an audience as we should, if we merely allow the preacher's words to strike the ear and nothing more.

All do not give even that much attention; many are wilfully distracted.

But, what am I saying? That good intention and preparation of the heart, that earnest desire to understand what is good and to fulfil it, is not, as I have before remarked, by any means the object that brings every one to the sermon. Therefore, I am afraid that there are some who do not trouble themselves about paying the necessary attention. And how, you ask? why am I afraid of that? Every one seems to attend, the people are all sitting or standing quietly in their places, and no one speaks a word. That is true; but what about the disposition? Where are the thoughts? The learned Philo says justly: "There are enough who bring their ears to the sermon, but not their hearts or their minds."[1] These are distracted with all kinds of thoughts and cares, at home or elsewhere; or if their thoughts remain in the church, they are caught up by some chance object that offers itself, such as, for instance, to see who is coming in or going out, to admire others, and sometimes even to feed their own wicked desires; so that when the sermon is over, they are not able to say what it was about. Nay, sometimes they throw the blame on the preacher, and say they could not understand him or his way of speaking. I should not dare to accuse people of such things, my dear brethren, did I not know from the teaching of holy men, nay, from Christ Himself, how the devil tries to prevent the fruit of the Word of God from coming to those who hear sermons. Those whom he cannot keep away from the sermon, under the pretext that they do not require it, or that they cannot stand so long, or that they cannot leave home at such an early hour, or that their conscience would be made uneasy, the crafty enemy attacks during the sermon: he presents all sorts of objects before their eyes, he distracts them with a hundred imaginations, he

[1] Aures in auditorium, non mentem afferunt.

makes them tired and sleepy, so that they will either understand very little, or will receive no impression or profit in their hearts from what they have listened to distractedly and with a divided attention. Christ says, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved."[1] It is just like what happens at great public banquets, at which many people sit down at different tables; sometimes a hungry soul comes up, in the person of one of the waiters, and seizing the full plate of some guest, who happens to turn his eyes away from it for a moment, puts an empty one in its place. The evil spirits are like hungry robbers, says St. Ambrose; they are hellish birds of prey, who fly about in the church during the explanation of the Word of God, and where they see any one who is not watchful over his senses and thoughts, they steal away the food of his soul from his mouth, and the Word of God from his heart.[2] Therefore, let each one be careful not to allow those invisible birds of prey to find any room in his thoughts, if he does not wish to remain hungry after the meal is over; that is to say, to go home after the sermon without any profit, and in the same state of ignorance as before.

Others do not attend to the whole sermon.

If there are only a few (and to judge from outward appearances, I think I can congratulate myself that such is the case), if there are only a few who are wilfully distracted, and pay no attention, there are perhaps many more who, though not wanting in attention, yet do not take the same notice of everything that is said. The saying of the Wise Man is full of meaning: "A fool receiveth not the words of prudence, unless thou say those things which are in his heart."[3] If anything ludicrous or novel is said, then all are eager to listen; but in other things the attention is not so much strained. See what happens in a theatre: when the curtain is raised, there is complete stillness, and all eyes are directed to the stage, to see what is coming on; in half an hour's time curiosity begins to languish, the people talk and laugh with each other, so that it is sometimes difficult to hear what is said on the stage. This is especially the case if the subjects represented are of a serious character and occupy a considerable time, although they may be necessary to the understanding of the play. But the people do not trouble themselves about the latter point. As soon, however, as there is a change on the stage, a new piece, a

[1] Venit diabolus et tollit verbum de corde eorum, ne credentes salvi fiant.—Luke viii. 12.

[2] Harpiæ infernales sunt, ut auferant verbum de corde eorum.

[3] Non recipit stultus verba prudentiæ, nisi dixeris ea, quæ versantur in corde ejus.—Prov. xviii. 2.

dance or a comedy, then the attention of the audience is aroused again, and they listen with admiration and pleasure. When the novelty is over, they commence to talk again about what they have seen. Oh, they say, that was fine; how well he danced, what a clever play, etc. Ah, my God! how is it that I am forced, by the sluggish desires and weak appetites of many Christians for the food of their souls, to compare the preaching of Thy most holy Word and Thy eternal truths to a vain and idle play? Yes, my Lord, Thou Thyself wast forced to do the same by Thy Prophet Ezechiel: "Thou art to them as a musical song which is sung with a sweet and agreeable voice; and they hear Thy words and do them not."[1] And the same thing happens nowadays among those to whom Thou orderest Thy truths to be preached. In the beginning of the sermon, when they who come in time are still in their first fervor, they are all eagerness to hear what the subject is, but bye and bye they grow indifferent; I know what he is going to say, they think to themselves, and they allow their eyes and their thoughts free play, and show by their behavior that they are inattentive. If some story is related, or a striking simile brought in, then they are all attention, they listen open-mouthed, so that it is easy to see that they have become quieter, but when the story is at an end, some of them allow their heads to sink down again; they relapse into their former distraction, or begin to think of the story they have heard, without paying any attention to the conclusion to be drawn from it, which is, after all, the real truth that God wished to imprint on their hearts in that manner. "Thou art to them as a musical sound." They hear Thy Word, oh, Lord, as if it were a play or a profane song! And thus it is often necessary to introduce something interesting, in order to awaken or to keep up their attention.

That is a great irreverence toward God.

But is that the way to treat God, who is speaking to us, with proper reverence and respect? I feel ashamed when I think that, if an earthly sovereign speaks to us, we observe a most reverent and humble demeanor, and pay the greatest attention to what he says; although we might easily allow ourselves to be distracted, for no matter how powerful earthly kings are, they cannot see what is passing in our minds. But God is present in the hearts of every one of you, my dear brethren, when we are preaching His Word to you, and He knows their inmost recesses. What does He think, when He finds your minds so distracted

[1] Es eis quasi carmen musicum, quod suavi dulcique sono canitur, et audiunt verba tua, et non faciunt ea.—Ezech. xxxiii. 32.

that they are wandering here and there in search of enjoyment and pleasure, and your hearts so cold that you hear everything as if you heard nothing, and allow the principal parts of the sermon to escape you? What does He think when He sees that you are so carried away by distractions that your senses are occupied with other things, while His voice passes by you unheeded, while your thoughts are filled with vanities and sinful imaginations? Certainly the Almighty has reason to complain, as He did long ago by the mouth of the Prophet Isaias: these people assembled before Me to hear Me, "but their heart is far from Me;"[1] nay, sometimes even against me.

It is a sign of a very remiss desire of learning what is good

Is that the way to hear sermons with the desire of being instructed and of learning what is good, and of deriving therefrom advantage for one's soul? If, for instance, one who has been to Jerusalem, were to relate his experiences in company, to tell how far that place is from here, what towns must be passed through to get there, what roads are the most dangerous and difficult, what one must principally guard against, what he must observe and how much money he must bring with him in order to arrive in safety; some of those who listen to him, and who have no idea of ever visiting Jerusalem, do not take much interest in what he says, unless he relates something amusing, strange, or wonderful that he has seen in those countries; for, they think, what is it all to me! I do not intend going to Jerusalem. On the other hand, if there is, amongst those listening, any one who intends visiting Jerusalem, he listens to everything with the greatest attention, and he is more interested in the details of the journey than in the amusing circumstances that accompany it, because he wishes to know what he has to do in order to accomplish his intended journey successfully. The same thing happens in a sermon, my dear brethren; we speak of the Heavenly Jerusalem, for which all men are created as for their last end, and of the joys that are to be found there; we describe the rough and narrow way that leads thither, and the many dangers that must be encountered on that way, as well as the temptations and dangerous occasions that must be overcome and avoided, and the virtues and good works that must be practised, in order to arrive there with greater security; we speak, too, of the way in which we must use our money and riches, by placing them, as if by an exchange, in the hands of the poor, so that we may have a great treasure of merits to bring with us. Now, if a man is so frivolous

[1] Cor autem ejus longe est a me.—Isaias xxix. 13.

that he seldom comes to a sermon, or has little taste for such subjects, or listens to them in a sleepy, indifferent, or distracted manner, and pays attention only when something amusing is said, what are we to think of such a one? Oh, certainly, I have reason to think that that man does not seriously intend to reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, for he has no desire to learn how and by what road one must travel to get there. He loves earth more than Heaven, and, in a word, the kingdom of Heaven is not for him, he does not care about having any share in it.

Earnest listeners do like Magdalen.

But he who loves his soul and his eternal happiness and is determined to undertake this journey to his heavenly country, pays the greatest attention, that not a single word may escape him; he stands, or sits, like Magdalen, at the feet of Jesus Christ, to hear his teaching and instructions. How motionless, how attentively, how eagerly did not that zealous soul listen to her Lord? Her sister Martha came up and asked her to help in the work of preparing food for Christ: She said, Lord, dost thou not see that I must work alone, while my sister sits idly there? "tell her, therefore, to help me."[1] And what did Magdalen do? She remained where she was, enraptured with the words of her Lord. She made no answer, not even a gesture of displeasure, although she could have easily and modestly replied: Go away, I have no time now. No, says St. Augustine, speaking of this matter, she did not wish to say even those few words, for fear of interrupting her Lord: "If she had given any answer, she would not have been able to listen so attentively."[2] And therefore she remained silent and immovable. For she knew very well how important it was for her to hear always with the greatest attention whatever her Lord had to say to her. So that the first thing to observe, when hearing a sermon, is to listen with the greatest attention to everything that is said. And we should be impelled to this, my dear brethren, partly by the reverence we owe the Almighty God, who speaks to our hearts in sermons, and partly by the interests of our own souls, which render such attention very necessary. The second thing that must be observed, and even with greater diligence than the first, is to listen to sermons with the greatest desire to profit by them. The meaning of that is, that every one must apply to himself, and to his own advantage, everything that he hears in the sermon. How this is to be done, we shall see in the

[1] Domine! non est tibi curæ? Dic ergo illi ut me adjuvet.

[2] Si . . . pararet respondendi sermonem, remetteret audiendi attentionem.

Second Part.

The Word of God is the food of the soul; every one must therefore seek his own nourishment therein.

As I have already proved from the Holy Fathers, the Word of God, explained in sermons, is the food of souls, by which these latter are to be maintained in their strength, health, life, and zeal in the divine service. Christ, the eternal Truth, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, says: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God!"[1] It is a much more necessary and strengthening food than eating and drinking are for the body; because corporal food, no matter how strong it is, could not raise a dead body to life, whereas the Word of God can raise the dead to life; that is to say, it can move to sorrow and repentance, to confession and penance, sinners whose souls are dead, and it can thus restore them to the life of grace. But now, suppose that there is a table spread with all sorts of viands before me, what good is it to me if I only look at the different dishes, without eating any of them? In the same way, what advantage is it for my soul if I hear a sermon with attention, but do not apply it to myself, eat it, so to speak, and appropriate it for my own advantage? The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "A man of sense will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself."[2] That is to say, he listens to wise words with joy, and uses them for his own advantage.

This is not done by those who apply what they hear to others.

There are three classes of people who fail in this particular: the first consists of those who are like the carvers at a table who have nothing to do but cut up the meats and place them before others, while they eat very little themselves. So, there are some who apply to others what they hear in a sermon, and keep nothing for themselves. Ha, they think, how well that fits such a one! Quite right; it is just what that other wants! He is getting his share of it now! What a pity that such a one is not here, this sermon is just the thing for him; and so forth. But, do we come to sermons only to apply what we hear to others, and that too often with a rash judgment? What good is it to you that others should be warned of their duty, if you yourself receive no fruit therefrom? You come here to look after your own soul, and not to pronounce judgment on others. Christ says of the good: "They hear the Word and keep it."[3] Although it is impossible to treat of every subject in one and the same sermon, yet, in every truth that is preached, he who is earnestly intent on his salvation,

[1] Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei.—Matth. iv. 4

[2] Verbum sapiens, quodcunque audierit scius, laudabit, et ad se adjiciet.—Eccli. xxi. 18.

[3] Audientes verbum retinent.

will certainly find something good that he can apply to himself with profit.

The same people are displeased when the truth is told them.

And meanwhile, the very same people, who trouble themselves so much about the affairs of others, if their own vices are even barely alluded to, commence to get vexed, to murmur and complain, as if they thought it wrong to allude to them in such a way. If you throw a stone amongst a number of dogs, the one you hit will begin to howl. As long as these people are not interfered with, they think the sermon a very good one indeed. They wish others to hear the truth, they do not want to hear it themselves. The unjust and avaricious are quite pleased when they hear the impure and the intemperate condemned; but speak to them of giving alms, of restoring ill-gotten goods, or of withdrawing their hearts from the things of earth, and they get quite angry and displeased. On the other hand, a libertine or an impure man listens with pleasure to every sermon, as long as there is nothing said of impure love, dangerous company and occasions, mortification of the flesh and of the senses. If the sermon is against drunkenness, it pleases the women, because they are anxious to have their husbands cured of that evil habit, and they think the preacher cannot talk severely enough about it. If, on the other hand, some subject is introduced which touches them up on some sore point,—for instance, the vain and frivolous fashions of the day, obstinacy, self-will, disobedience, jealousy, credulity, unfounded suspicions of their husbands, the wasting of precious time, unnecessary visits, the habit of gambling, dangerous meetings, speaking of the faults and failings of others, etc.; oh, then they do not like the sermon at all, and there is no end to their complaints about it. They think that the preacher does not know how people in the world must act. So true is the saying of St. Augustine: "They love the truth when it shines on others, but not when it reproaches themselves."[1] Writing of the words of Christ: "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?"[2] the same St. Augustine says, in answer to these words: because thou speakest truth.[3] "Even on that account, oh, Lord, they refuse to believe Thee, because Thou speakest the truth."

There are some who apply everything to themselves too anxiously.

The second class of people who do not hear sermons properly, comprehends those who, failing in a different way altogether from the former, act like guests who take their share of everything at table, whether it is good for them or not, although they thus

[1] Amant veritatem lucentem, oderunt redarguentem.
[2] Si veritatem dico vobis, quare non creditis mihi.
[3] Quia veritatem dicis.

overload the stomach, to their own great inconvenience. There are some who apply to themselves, with a scrupulous anxiety, everything they hear in a sermon, although there is not the least reason for them to do so. So that sometimes a preacher hardly knows what to do, or how to treat of a subject. If he preaches, no matter how carefully, of some consoling doctrine, he cannot reprove the sins of the wicked; if he denounces sin and represents its malice and the way in which it is committed, he disturbs the consciences of the pious and innocent, who take to themselves that which was meant only for others. Alas! they think, full of fear and anxiety, perhaps I have done that too! Oh, my God, what shall I do? I may not have made a good confession in my whole life! If such is the case, I shall never go to Heaven; and any number of such absurdities. Although this is a sign of a good and tender conscience, yet it often prevents the proper advantage being derived from a sermon. Perhaps I have done that too? Yes, perhaps, and perhaps not. What is the good of this perhaps? None, but to fill you with unnecessary fear and anxiety, which will completely disturb you, and make it impossible for you to understand other parts of the sermon that are of real use for you. First of all, you should pay attention to what is said. If an uneasy thought or a scruple comes into your mind, wait till the sermon is over; you will have plenty of time then to think it over and see whether you are really guilty or not, and if you are guilty, you can amend you fault. Otherwise you must not take to yourself what is meant for others; it belongs to them, not to you. St. Augustine again furnishes me with a beautiful simile here: he says we must hear preachers and apply their words to ourselves, as if they were letters sent us from Heaven. Now suppose you went to the post-office to look for a letter; you ask if there is anything for you, and you are told that you must look for your letter yourself. You do so: there are hundreds of letters lying on the table; you take up the first one and after seeing the address, you throw it away, and the same with the second and third and fourth. And why? Because, you say, my name is not on those letters, none of them belong to me. You continue your search and at last you find one addressed to you, and you say at once, this letter is for me, and you take it home and read it. You must act in the same way when you hear a sermon. I know that I am not guilty in this matter, this letter is not for me; here is something in which I must amend my conduct, that I must bring home with me and think over.

Some attend merely to the style of oratory and not to the truth preached.

The third and last class embraces those who resemble guests that neither eat anything themselves, nor carve for others: they occupy themselves in talking, or in admiring rare dishes. People of this class, who hear the Word of God, do not, it is true, apply it to others, but neither do they apply it to themselves; their only concern is to hear something new, beautiful, or interesting. What would you think of a sick man, suffering from fever, who when the doctor comes to bleed him, would occupy himself only with looking and wondering at the surgical instruments of the latter? Oh, what a beautiful lancet? Where did you buy it? Who made it? How much did it cost? Ah, my good friend, the doctor would say, that is not the question now; I am come to restore you to health; it is no matter to you whether the instrument is a beautiful one or not, whether it has cost much or little: the only thing that must trouble us now is to take away the poisonous blood from you: you need not concern yourself about anything else. My dear brethren, some of us are, perhaps, suffering from a spiritual malady; we are all liable to the fever of evil inclinations and desires! "The fever from which we suffer is ambition, or avarice, or lust,"[1] says St. Ambrose, or pride, or drunkenness, or impatience, or tepidity. Now God wishes to make or to keep you healthy by sermons. He uses His divine Word as an instrument to detect the weakness of your soul, to cleanse it from evil inclinations, and to provide it with a remedy against vices and the dangerous occasions of sin, and to draw its desires away from earthly, in order to direct them to heavenly things. Therefore let it not be your sole care to see whether the sermon is a fine one or not, it is not for that you come: your only intention should be to seek the profit of your soul by the truths you hear, to amend your evil ways, and to become more zealous in the service of God; that should be your only business here.

Conclusion and exhortation.

I conclude with the words of the Wise Man that I quoted before: "A man of sense will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself."[2] Let each one, therefore, ask himself at the beginning of a sermon, like St. Bernard: "Why art thou here?" Why did I come to the sermon? Was it not to draw profit out of it for my soul? Therefore I must pay attention to what is said, and I must and will apply to myself the truths that I have heard and understood. If we hear sermons in this manner, my dear brethren, they will help us to our eternal salvation. Amen.

[1] Febris nostra ambitio est, febris nostra avaritia est, febris nostra luxuria est.
[2] Verbum sapiens, quodcunque audierit scius laudabit, et ad se adjiciet.

Another Introduction for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Hæc illo loquente ad eos, ecce princeps unus accessit, et adorabat eum.—Matth. ix. 18.

"And as he was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler came up and adored him."

During the last three years of His life, Jesus was always to be found amongst the people to whom He preached and explained His divine truths. Who would not think that the words of the Man-God would have force enough to move all His hearers and to draw their hearts to himself? And yet there were very few who were so much influenced by His preaching as to remain constant to His doctrine. The Scribes and Pharisees became only more obstinate and wicked; the common people, who followed Him everywhere, and many of whom believed in him, kept their faith as long they could see the signs and wonders He worked, but when the innocent Jesus was taken prisoner and condemned to death, there was no one to take His part or to say a word in His favor. Even those whom He had miraculously healed of their diseases, were, according to the testimony of the Holy Fathers, amongst the rabble who cried out: "Crucify Him!"[1] Oh, divine Teacher! Since that was the case with you, I no longer wonder that in our days we can do such little good with our preaching. How many Pharisees there are still who hate the truth, and who are made only more obstinate by it? Amongst all those who listen to sermons, how many are there who derive real profit from what they hear? Where the fault lay in olden times, and where it lies now, is known to Thee. My opinion is that there are three principal faults committed by those who hear sermons. Some fail before the sermon, others during the sermon, and the majority after it. I have spoken of the first, when I explained how one ought to come to sermons; I will now speak of the second, and explain how one should act during the sermon. How must we hear sermons? —*Continues as before.*

[1] Crucifige!

TWELFTH SERMON.

HOW ONE SHOULD ACT AFTER HEARING A SERMON.

Subject.

1st. We must so take to heart what we have heard, that we will act on it. 2d. If we do not do so, we have reason to fear.—*Preached on the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Vade et tu fac similiter.—Luke x. 37.
"Go thou and do likewise."

Introduction.

When Christ, the first and chief of all preachers, had preached the Gospel of to-day, and explained to the doctor of the law what he should do to be saved, and after He had shown him, in the clearest manner, that he should love God with his whole heart and whole soul and with all his mind, and all his strength, He adds: "Do this and thou shalt live."[1] Again, after having told him that to save his soul he must love his neighbor as himself, and having explained how that is to be done, he adds again: "Go thou and do likewise."[2] A beautiful conclusion, if the doctor of the law had only taken it to heart and acted upon it: "Go and do."[3] Oh, my dear brethren, if Christians, nowadays, always took to heart the conclusions of the sermons they hear, how much could we not do for the salvation of their souls by our preaching! "Go thou and do." But when that is not the case, all our preaching and your listening are of no avail. And this is the fault of the greater number. But I shall try to do my duty and to prove to you that you must take to heart the sermons you hear. St. Augustine agrees with me, and furnishes me with the divisions of my discourse. He says: "Christ speaks by the mouth of the preacher, we must hear, act, and fear."[4] That we must hear sermons, how we are to go to them, and how we are to hear them, has been already explained on the three last Sundays; to-day we have to treat of the principal thing, namely, how we are to go away after the sermon: "Go and do."

[1] Hoc fac et vives. [2] Vade, et tu fac similiter.
[3] Vade et fac. [4] Christus loquitur, audiamus, faciamus, timeamus.

Plan of Discourse.

We must so take to heart what we have heard, that we will act on it. This will be the first point. If we do not do so, we have reason to fear. That will be the second point.

Oh, God, who speakest to us in every sermon through the intercession of the Mother of Thy Incarnate Word and that of the angels who are so obedient to Thy Word, we beg of Thee to give us grace to keep Thy Word after having heard it and to fulfil the truths we have learned, so that we may have nothing to fear.

First Part.

It is useless to put the seed into the ground if it produces no fruit.

Although the husbandman may have prepared the ground with great labor, and sown the seed in due season, and rejoiced in the prospect of a good crop, on account of the favorable weather, yet, what good is all this to him if the roots of the plant are gnawed by the mice and the worms, or the plants themselves are eaten by the cattle before they are come to maturity, or dried up by drought, or washed away by heavy rains, so that he cannot reap any harvest? What good will all his labor be to him? The poor man has toiled in vain, his work goes for nothing! If he had kept quiet and remained idle at home, he would not have had any hope of a harvest, and would be spared the pain of disappointment.

It is useless to preach the Word of God, if the hearers reap no fruit from it.

My dear brethren, "the seed is the Word of God."[1] It is, as I have often told you before, sown in your hearts by the Supreme Lord, through the mouth of the preacher. Suppose, now, that this latter does his duty, and calls on the Holy Ghost, by earnest prayer, to inspire him with what is useful for you; he spares neither trouble nor labor, that he may explain the truth he intends to preach about so clearly and impressively, that every one may understand it. Suppose, too, that there is no fault on your part, that you come to the sermon in good time, with a pure intention and a great desire of saving your soul, that you listen with great attention and an eager wish to profit by what you hear, that your sighs and other signs of emotion have inspired the preacher with courage and hope, and that the resolution you make in secret gives joy and pleasure to God, to His angels and to the whole court of Heaven. But, with all this, if the Word of God did not remain in your heart, nor His truth in your memory, what good would his hope be to the preacher, your resolution to yourselves,

[1] Semen est verbum Dei.

or the joy and pleasure to the heavenly court? What good is it, if your hearts are like a broad public way, of which Christ speaks in the parable, on which the seed is trodden under foot, or eaten by the birds? If you know that what you have heard is true, and you are resolved to fulfil it, and yet, as soon as the sermon is over, banish it all out of your mind by other thoughts, cares, business, company, so that you never think of it again, what will it profit you? Ah, the preacher has labored in vain; your hurrying to church has not helped you, Heaven has rejoiced fruitlessly; we have altogether done as little good as if we poured water into a sieve, out of which it must all empty itself immediately, or as if the sermon was preached to the empty benches and walls of the church.

The whole good of the sermon consists in fulfilling the truths we have heard.

Oh, my dear brethren, it is after the sermon that the real good of it is seen, it is then that the first fruits must be reaped. There is a great difference between a sermon and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If you hear Mass on Sundays and holydays with inward attention and outward reverence, you do your part, and, as far as this commandment is concerned, you are not bound to do any more. On the contrary, if you come to a sermon, and hear it as you ought, even if you think often of it afterwards, that is not near enough, that is only the smallest and least profitable part of your duty. What stills remain for you to do is the most important of all and everything depends on it, and that is the real observance, the practical fulfilment of the truths you have heard. The Apostle says: "For, not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."[1] And that should be the only end and object of your coming to sermons; this the only fruit that we must derive from them, namely, so to take to heart what we have heard, that we are not satisfied with merely speculating upon it, but really act according to it. "Go and do."[2]

This explained by an example.

A pious woman in Paris, as our Father Rogaccius relates, was once going home after a sermon, when she met a gentleman, hurrying to church in the hope of hearing a part of the sermon, who asked her if it was over yet. No, said the woman, it is not over yet. And how is it, then, asked the gentleman, that the people are coming out of the church in crowds, and do not remain to the end? Because, said she, the preacher has finished his exhortation and has left the pulpit. This answer surprised the gentleman. Are

[1] Non enim auditores legis justi sunt apud Deum, sed factores legis justificabuntur.—Rom. ii. 13.

[2] Vade et fac!

you in your senses, he asked, or do you take me for a fool? I have asked you if the sermon was over and you said, no; and now you tell me that the preacher has left the pulpit. What is the meaning of that? It is all true, answered the pious woman; I maintain what I said. You must know, sir, that it is one thing for the preacher to have ended his discourse, and another for the sermon to be quite finished. The first concerns the preacher alone, the second concerns both him and his audience, and is certainly not finished for either of them, because what he said to the people from the pulpit has still to be performed by them. So that the sermon is not yet over, nor will it be, until the people who have heard it realize its teaching in their lives and actions. There is still a great deal to be done before the sermon comes to an end. What a clever answer that was!

Here, my dear brethren, we come upon the place where the fault of the greater number lies hidden. We have great reason, nowadays, to make the same complaint that St. Augustine made against the Jews and Pharisees, who heard the doctrine and preaching of Christ with such attention. The Holy Scripture says: "They wondered;"[1] "but they did not amend their lives,"[2] adds the saint. Is not this complaint true of many, who, when going home after the sermon, can only say with astonishment: What a fine sermon that was! And that is all the good it has done them! Poor preacher! did all your efforts tend to nothing else but to hear the empty praise—you have preached well? Oh, if that is the case, I pity you; you had better have remained at home in your room and said the Rosary. Is it only for this that you have worked all the week, to hear a few empty words of praise? A fine reward for your labor, indeed! Unfortunate hearer! Have you derived no other profit from the sermon than to be able to say a few words in praise of it? If so, I am sorry that you listened with such patience and attention; it was not worth your while to come away from your house, and tire yourself by standing a whole hour in the church. What good is it to you that the preacher has delivered a fine sermon, when you do not live according to it, and are not made a bit better by it? Alas, the sermon was not a good one, nor was it well listened to! Neither you nor I have attained our object; both of us have lost all fruit and profit; you, that of your patience and attention; I, that of my labor. And, while the Apostle glories in the Thessalonians: "For you are our glory and joy;"[3]

Therefore they are wrong who merely praise the sermon.

[1] Mirabantur.—John vii. 15. [2] Sed non corrigebantur.
[3] Vos enim estis gloria nostra et gaudium.—I. Thess. ii. 20.

"therefore we always give thanks to God without ceasing; because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the Word of God, who worketh in you that you have believed." We, on the contrary, might well say: You are our shame and confusion, because we have preached to deaf ears and done no good to souls.

Still more those who are in no way improved by the sermon, of whom there are many.

How many are there not, also, amongst those Christians who hear sermons, of whom it might be said with truth: "They admire, but do not amend their lives?" Sermons are preached so often, in so many different places, for the last twenty, thirty, or forty years, and longer, and what is the result of it all? People come and listen with wonder and pleasure, with desire and longing, but there is not the least improvement in their lives. Sermons are preached against pride, avarice, injustice, immorality, dangerous companions and meetings, hatred, envy, vindictiveness, and enmity; against the common habit of swearing and cursing, against back-biting, calumny, rash judgments, impure conversations, drunkenness, vanity in dress, sloth in the divine service, and so forth. But have people become more humble or modest? Have they restored the ill-gotten goods, or the injured character of their neighbor? Do they avoid bad company? Are they more chaste and restrained in their thoughts, desires, language, dress, manner, and actions? Have Christian charity, union, and friendship been established amongst enemies? Is there no cursing or swearing to be heard any more? Is drunkenness at an end? Is there an increase of zeal in the divine service? Would to God that it were so! "They wondered," they have heard and understood well enough, "but they did not amend their ways,"[1] they are not a bit better for it. Preachers recommend the works of Christian virtue, the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments. They inculcate the necessity of true penance, of patience in adversity, of a pure intention, by which we must direct all our works to our last end, to God, and to Heaven. They warn parents of their duty towards their children, and children of their duty towards their parents, masters and mistresses of what they owe their servants, subjects of what they owe their rulers, and so forth. Has all this done any good to those who heard it? Many have admired what was said to them; but they do not amend their ways; they remain as they were before, without making any improvement.

[1] Mirabantur. Sed non corrigebantur.

This proved by a simile

Have you ever remarked, my dear brethren, what occurs in a large establishment, in which there are many different people together? All these people have different occupations, according to their different positions: some sit at the fire and warm themselves, others stand and talk together, others drink and play, or merely look on; one of the servants is cleaning the room, another is in the kitchen cooking, a third is spinning or sewing; there is a waiter laying the table, here is some one engaged at his trade; the master of the house is writing or studying, the mistress is occupied with the children, and all the others have their own occupation. Now, suppose that a band of musicians come before the door, and begin to play; at once everybody in the house leaves his or her business; some run to the door, others to the window and listen with all their ears. How beautiful that is, they say to each other. When the music is over, they return to their former occupations: one to the fire, another to the interrupted conversation, the third to his trade, the fourth to the kitchen, the fifth to the spinning-wheel, and so on for the others. A striking example of what happens to many who hear sermons is the complaint that God makes to the Prophet Ezechiel: "Thou art to them as a musical song... they hear Thy words and do them not."[1] The many different occupations of those people mentioned above represent the different vices of the inhabitants of each town and community. One is inclined to one thing, another to another. When the bell rings for the sermon, they all leave their vices for a time, they go to church and, for a whole hour, they hear the Word of God with attention, eagerness, and pleasure. They say: That was a good sermon, I could have listened still longer to it. But what is the fruit of it? "They hear Thy words and do them not." They all return to their former occupations. They go back to the same vices, the same company, the same habits, the same foul sins, as before. They do not act according to what they have heard.

The worst are those who, though frightened, do not amend. Explained by an example

Even many of those who are frightened by the terrible truths they hear from the pulpit, do not amend their conduct in the least when the sermon is over. They seem to me like the blind man of Bethsaida, to whom Christ restored sight, as we read in the Gospel of St. Mark. Our Lord asked him if he could see anything. He answered: "I see men, as it were trees, walking."[2] What do you mean? It seems that you are still blind; trees do not walk, how can men walk like trees? Yet he saw right enough,

[1] Es eis, quasi carmen musicum... audiunt verba tua, et non faciunt ea.—Ezech. xxxiii. 32.
[2] Video homines velut arbores ambulantes.—Mark viii. 24.

says St. Peter Chrysologus: "After being cured by Christ, he saw that men are like trees in this world."[1] You may have remarked, my dear brethren, that, when a strong wind blows, the trees shake, the branches and leaves begin to tremble as if the whole tree were about to be torn up by the roots. But the roots hold firm: it is only the branches and leaves that are stirred; the trunk remains firmly attached to the ground, or if it is sometimes blown down, the wind must be very strong indeed. Do we not see the same thing nowadays amongst Christians? The storm of truth assails their consciences, when they listen to a sermon, and moves them, by representing the eternal truths of our faith, the shortness and uncertainty of life, the bitterness of death, the rigor of divine justice, the pains of hell, the joys of Heaven. Many are moved, frightened, and made uneasy by these truths; they sigh and tremble like leaves on the trees, and often condemn their own wickedness. But are the roots of their sins torn up? How many of them make good confessions? How many do penance? When and where is the real amendment of their lives to be found? Oh, blind man of Bethsaida! If you could only look now you would see many men going about like trees,[2] you would see how they humble themselves, sigh and so forth, as if they were about to leave their sins. But it is only the head that moves with them, not the heart. As soon as the wind is over, when they have forgotten their fear and anxiety, they settle down into the same vices as before, they have strong roots that still fasten them to the earth; that is to say, their sins, of which they do not repent.

How one must think and act after the sermon.

It should not be so, my dear brethren; we must indeed be moved like the trees, but we must not remain stationary like them. We should pull up our sins by the roots, and do and fulfil what we have heard in the sermon. "Christ speaks, we must act."[3] He who wishes to derive profit from a sermon must preach it anew to himself. He must either remain for some time in the church, or go home quietly and think over what he has heard, especially that which concerns his own faults, or that in which he feels himself moved by divine inspiration. He must ask himself: How have I behaved hitherto, with regard to this truth which I now acknowledge; what has been said was certainly uttered for my good, and not to the walls and benches of the church. Have I always avoided the vice mentioned in the ser-

[1] Post curam Christi viderat, quod homines velut arbores transirent in hoc sæculo.
[2] Velut arbores. [3] Christus loquitur, faciamus.

mon, or have I thought it a matter of little importance to do so? Have I hitherto practised the good work recommended in the sermon, and in the manner recommended? What will I do in future? How am I to realize in my daily life, in such and such circumstances, what I have heard to-day? In this way we can make new resolutions, and beg of God the grace to keep them, and every accident of life reminds us of what we have heard, acknowledged, and resolved. That is the way to hear sermons with profit to the soul, and to cause the seed of the Word of God to produce its fruit a hundred fold. They alone who act thus are called blessed by Christ: "Blessed are they who heart he Word of God and keep it."[1] "Go thou and do it![2] "Christ speaks, we must act!"[3] If we do not, there is only one alternative, and that to our great loss; "we have reason to fear,"[4] as we shall see in the

Second Part.

To know the truth and not fulfil it, causes God to cast us off even in this life.

What have we to fear? That the sermons we hear will cause the lessening or the total deprivation of divine grace in this life, and will subject us to a more rigorous judgment and a deeper damnation in eternity. There is no doubt that sermons, preached frequently and zealously, are a great sign of the divine liberality and mercy to a town or community; but do you not think that they are also a means of satisfying the justice and anger of God? That as they give food and nourishment to some souls, they are poisonous to others; that they are a reward to some, a punishment to others; an enlightenment for some, a deprivation of light to others, and that while they help some to save their souls, they occasion the loss of others? The Word of God is certainly a great blessing for many, who live according to it and are guided by it, and who would be lost eternally without it; but it is also a great curse to others, who, although they hear and believe it, yet do not amend their lives, but remain in their sins. St. Augustine says: "The same rain that ripens the corn for the barn, causes the thorns to grow in order to be cast into the fire."[5] In the same way, the heavenly rain of the Word of God, when it pours itself upon souls that are well disposed to receive it, makes them grow in virtue and disposes them for Heaven; but when it falls upon souls that are filled with the thorns of sinful

[1] Beati, qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud.—Luke xi. 28.
[2] Vade et fac! [3] Christus loquitur, faciamus. [4] Timeamus.
[5] Segeti pluit ad horreum, spinis ad ignem.

inclinations, wilfully indulged in, without any effort to uproot them, it only hastens on their ruin and destruction. This is what God says by the mouth of the Apostle: "For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briars, is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt."[1] Hence the Holy Fathers conclude that when a sinner, after hearing many sermons, gives no sign of amendment, it is a sure proof that he is hardened in wickedness and abandoned by God and by His grace; nay, that God, who at first sent His preacher to explain to him His Word, with the benevolent intention of enlightening his understanding and moving his heart, will at last make use of the same preacher, as an instrument of His anger, to make the sinner blinder and more hardened than before. It is terrible what God says to the provoking house, by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel: "Thus saith the Lord God: set on a pot, set it on, I say, and put water into it;"[2] when this was done and the pot was not yet cleansed, He says further: "Set it empty upon burning coals, that it may be hot, and the brass thereof may be melted; and let the filth of it be melted in the midst thereof, and let the rust of it be consumed."[3] And after all this, what follows? "Great pains have been taken, and the great rust thereof is not gone out, not even by fire."[4] And what was said of it at last? "Thy uncleanness is execrable, because I desired to cleanse thee, and thou art not cleansed from thy filthiness: neither shalt thou be cleansed, before I cause my indignation to rest in thee."[5] And what is this pot? Oh, hardened sinner, it is you, says St. Augustine: "God compares the soul of the sinner to a brazen pot."[6] You are an unclean vessel, full of the filth of impurity, of the blood of vindictiveness, of the foulness of many scandals. The merciful God has so often desired to cleanse you with water, when He caused to be explained

[1] Terra enim sæpe venientem super se bibens imbrem, et generans herbam opportunam illis, a quibus colitur, accipit benedictionem a Deo. Proferens autem spinas et tribulos, reproba est, et maledicto proxima, cujus consummatio in combustionem.—Heb. vi. 7, 8.

[2] Hæc dicit Dominus Deus; pone ollam, pone, inquam, et mitte in eam aquam.—Ezech xxiv. 3.

[3] Pone quoque eam super prunas vacuam, ut incalescat, et liquefiat æs ejus, et confletur in medio ejus inquinamentum ejus, et consumatur rubigo ejus.—Ibid. xxiv. 11.

[4] Multo labore sudatum est, et non exivit de ea nimia rubigo ejus, neque per ignem.—Ibid. 12.

[5] Immunditia tua execrabilis, quia mundare te volui, et non es mundata sordibus tuis. Nec mundaberis prius, donec quiescere faciam indignationem meam in te.—Ibid. 13.

[6] Æneæ ollæ animam peccatricem comparant.

to you how wonderfully patient and merciful He is towards sinners, in order to move you to repent. He desired to cleanse you with fire when He caused the eternal fire of hell to be described to you in order to frighten you. "Great pains have been taken." Preachers sent by God have had much trouble and labor with you; but all in vain; nothing has induced you to repent. Hear, therefore, what will become of you: "Thus saith the Lord: Thy uncleanness is execrable, because I desired to cleanse thee, and thou art not cleansed from thy filthiness, neither shalt thou be cleansed, before I cause my indignation to rest in thee."[1]

As a just punishment

And, after such long continued ingratitude and obstinacy on the part of the sinner, and such fatherly mercy on the part of God, that punishment is not too severe, that anger and indignation not without just cause! A father who has a bad son, after trying by every means possible to bring him to a sense of duty, when he sees that his efforts are fruitless, is at length compelled, for the sake of his family, to disinherit that son and not to look upon him any more as his child. But how does he do that? In order to free himself from all blame, and to give his son no just cause of complaint, he sends a friend to the latter to explain how disobedient he was and to tell him of the punishment that is impending over him, although there is no hope that this warning will do any good. Now, who is to be blamed for this disinheriting of the bad son? Is the father to be accused of acting an unfatherly part and of being too severe on his son, or is the son to be blamed because, after repeated warnings, he still perseveres in his wickedness? There is no doubt that the latter has all the fault, and it is only right that he should be disinherited. What, then, must I think, on the one hand, of God who calls incessantly, in sermons, on the sinner to repent. On the other hand, of the sinner who hears the call but does not obey it? What am I to think, when I hear that God, after so often warning the wicked Pharao, said to Moses: "Go in to Pharao."[2] I know well that he will not hear nor obey thee,[3] because he is hardened. Nevertheless, go to him, and speak to him. What, I ask, am I to conclude from this, except that God is a merciful, patient, and long-suffering Father; and that we are His wilful and disobedient children, who abuse His patience so long that the warnings and sermons He so often causes us to hear become

[1] Immunditia tua execrabilis, quia mundare te volui, et non es mundata sordibus tuis.
[2] Ingredere, loquere ad Pharaonem.—Exod. x. 1. [3] Non audiet vos Pharao.

the terrible instruments of His anger, when He deprives us of our inheritance, because we refused to listen to Him.

A stricter account to render to the divine justice.

We must fear;[1] if we do not do as we are told in sermons, we have reason to fear. What else? The stricter account we shall have to render in judgment. For there is no doubt that more will be expected from him who has received more, as our Lord Himself says: The judgment of one who has no excuse to offer, will be sharper and more rigorous; and he is less to be excused, who was offered graces more frequently, which he neglected to profit by. How will you fare then, oh, sinful Christian? You have shown no sign of improvement after having heard the Word of God so often; how will you fare, when an account is demanded of your vices and sins, and of the good that you omitted to do? Alas! even if the great book were not opened against you to convince you of your wickedness; if both angels and devils kept away from you, and did not appear against you; if the just Judge Himself remained silent and refrained from condemning you, there would still remain another judge to put you to confusion. Hear what Christ says: "And if any man hear my words and keep them not, I do not judge him."[2] "He that receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him."[3] "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."[4] The exhortations you have heard, the truths you have learned, will stand against you, and strike you dumb with shame: the sermons, too, that you have heard will appear and cry out against you before the whole world: you knew it, you were aware of it, you could have done it, it was your duty to do it, but you did not wish to do it; and they will accuse you, too, of having profited so little by them, whereas if others had had a chance of hearing them, they would have produced much fruit, as Christ says in to-day's Gospel: "I say to you that prophets and kings have desired to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them." "But I tell you," is His threat in another place, "that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you."[5] The sermons that you have heard will bring forward, as so many witnesses against you, all those who profited by them. See, they will say, these people have entered into themselves and done penance for their sins; this impure man has given up his impurity

[1] Timeamus.

[2] Si quis audierit verba mea et non custodierit: ego non judico eum.—John xii. 47.

[3] Qui non accipit verba mea: habet qui judicet eum.—Ibid. 48.

[4] Sermo quem locutus sum, ille judicabit eum in novissimo die.—Ibid.

[5] Verumtamen dico vobis: Tyro et Sidoni remissius erit in die judicii, quam vobis.—Matth xi. 22.

and criminal love; this other has pardoned his enemy, others again have restored ill-gotten property, or confessed the sins they concealed through shame, or corrected the habit of cursing and swearing, or have become more careful in talk, behavior, and the company they frequent; that child is more respectful towards his parents, these parents are more careful of their children's salvation; these tepid Christians have become more zealous in the divine service, and all these whom you see on the right hand of the Judge, have thereby saved their souls. But you, who have also heard us, have not become a bit better. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." So that the Word of God, which is now given to you out of pure mercy, will then cry out for stricter justice and a severer vengeance against you.

Deeper damnation in eternity.

And besides that, it will make the pains of hell greater for you for all eternity. For that must be fulfilled which Our Lord has said in the Gospel of St. Luke: "And that servant who knew the will of his Lord, . . . and did not according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes."[1] Ah, my Lord and my God! Do I and so many others ascend the pulpit only to bring down eternal ruin on those souls, whom thou wishest to save by our preaching? Must we be a stumbling-block to Thy people, to make their fall more dangerous? Must I and others, whose only wish is to bring all those people with us into Heaven, appear against them as witnesses, on the day of Thy justice! Must the truths they have heard from our lips be the voice of one crying out, not in the desert, but in hell, to those unfortunate souls: You knew it, you could and ought to have done it, but you did not wish to do it! What a disappointment for our zeal! What a mistaken charity was ours! We always had the intention and the hope, my dear brethren, of helping you to save your souls, and behold, whether we like it or not, we help you to a deeper damnation! Instead of the good thoughts and works that we may have left in many pious souls, many more become more culpable, and less deserving of pardon, because we have preached to them! How can that be, oh, my God? Would it not be better for us to remain silent? Should we not renounce preaching? But, if we did, Thou wouldst be against us, and we should have to utter that eternal woe against ourselves: "Woe is me, because I have held my peace,"[2] and have not done my duty! Must we then continue to

[1] Ille autem servus, qui cognovit voluntatem Domini sui....et non fecit secundum voluntatem ejus, vapulabit multis.—Luke xii. 47.

[2] Væ mihi, quia tacui.—Isai. vi. 5.

preach? But, oh, terrible thought! by doing so, we shall make the sins of some more grievous; from one sermon to another, they will be more inexcusable, and will make their judgment more severe, their hell more intolerable! Must the people then remain away from sermons? Alas, they will be then still more culpable, and they will one day hear the words: "I called and you refused;"[1] I have prepared my light and grace for you and you did not wish to accept them! So that I do not know what is to be done.

Conclusion. Ah, Christians, if you wished, you could solve this difficulty, and free us from this anxiety, and yourselves from this fear. "Christ is speaking to us, let us act."[2] Let us stir ourselves to do the work that, as we have heard in sermons, we ought to do, and then there will be no cause for fear on either side. And Thou, oh, God of mercy! God, our Saviour! do not allow my voice to be the instrument of destruction to a single soul. Let the voice of Thy Blood, which was shed for all, pierce the hearts and consciences of all, and fill them with a wholesome fear of offending Thee, and leave behind in them a gentle attraction to love Thee constantly. If there are any who, on account of habitual sins, have hitherto refused to listen to Thy voice, ah, then, since they are, at all events, souls for whom Thou hast died, no matter how hardened they are, Thou hast still a voice left to pierce and soften them. Therefore, speak with Thy mighty word, inwardly to them, until they submit to Thy holy will, and one day see, with us all, Thy living, Incarnate Word, with the Holy Ghost, and praise and love Thee forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Third Sunday in Lent, and also for the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Text.

Beati, qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud.—Luke xi. 28. "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it."

To hear the Word of God in sermons is necessary for the salvation of the majority of people, and very useful for the salvation of all. To hear the Word of God in sermons willingly, attentively, and constantly, is one of the signs of eternal salvation, as I have proved on a former occasion. And yet, my dear brethren, not all who

[1] Vocavi et renuistis.—Prov. i. 24. [2] Christus loquitur, faciamus.

hear the Word of God in sermons willingly, attentively, and constantly, are pronounced blessed by Christ, but those who hear the Word of God, and keep it;[1] that is to say, those who fulfil what they hear in sermons. Oh, if this were done by every one, what a great thing it would be! etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. John the Baptist:

Text.

Posuerunt omnes, qui audierant in corde suo.—Luke i. 66.

"And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart."

That the aged Elizabeth should give birth to a son, and that Zacharias, after having been dumb, should commence to speak—these were wonders that might well be laid to heart. And in reality, all who heard of them were impressed deeply: "And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart." These words, my dear brethren, furnish me with matter to continue my instructions on the proper manner of hearing sermons. For on to-day we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the first preacher, who when asked who he was, replied: I am the voice of God crying out. Oh, would that my voice, too, like his, could penetrate hearts and awaken sinners to sorrow and repentance! Oh, that I could do that at least on this day; so that, like those people mentioned in the Gospel, we might always lay up in our hearts what we have heard, or will hear in sermons! For if this point is not gained, all our preaching is useless. Oh, holy St. Augustine, it is from you that I take the division of to-day's sermon; Christ spoke,[2] etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud.—Luke xi. 28. [2] Christus loquitur.

ON THE
PARTICULAR DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

THIRTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE YOUNG TO GOD.

Subject.

1st. To serve God in the time of youth is a service most pleasing to God, which He expects and requires in a most special manner. 2d. Therefore, they act very unjustly towards God, who refuse Him this service, and give it to another.—*Preached on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.*

Text.

Puer autem crescebat, et confortabatur plenus sapientia: et gratia Dei erat in illo.—Luke ii. 40.

"And the Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in Him."

Introduction.

See, Christian children, that is meant for you! The new-born Child Jesus is your special model and pattern, from whom you must learn how you ought to grow up and regulate your lives. "The Child grew;"[1] you also do that, daily and hourly; even while you are asleep or at play, you grow in age and size. "And waxed strong;"[2] you also wax strong by eating and drinking. But the chief thing is: "full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in Him."[3] It is in that you must imitate Him; so that the grace of God may never be lost on you. Therefore, you must understand the duty and obligations to which you are bound from your childhood: first, as to what you owe to God; secondly, as to what you owe to your parents, and thirdly, as to what you owe to yourselves in your future choice of a state of life. Since God is to be preferred to all, we shall commence with your duty

[1] Puer autem crescebat. [2] Et confortabatur.
[3] Plenus sapientia, et gratia Dei erat in illo.

to Him. What do you owe to Him? A zealous service, and a constant love from your very childhood, from your earliest years. And all men, no matter what their age or condition may be, must acknowledge that they also owe this to God. You young people, however, are bound to it in a special manner. And why? That is what we have to see in this and the following sermons. Namely—

Plan of Discourse.

To serve God and love Him in the time of youth, is a service most pleasing to God, which He expects from and requires of you in a most special manner. This I shall explain in the first part. Therefore, they act very unjustly towards God, who refuse Him this service and give it to another. This will form the subject of the second part.

Virgin Mother Mary! obtain from thy divine Child, who grew in divine wisdom and grace, as an example to the world, that all children may have knowledge and grace to spend the time of their youth in the love and service of thy Son alone; and for us, who have, perhaps, been wanting in our duty in this particular, obtain grace that we may redeem, by an increase of zeal, the shortcomings of our youth. This we beg of you, too, oh, holy angels, in whose charge we are from our very childhood.

First Part.

God always required, in the Old Law, that the first fruits should be offered in sacrifice to Him.

What is the reason that, in the Old Law, God always commanded the Jews, on the presentation of their first-born, to sacrifice to Him a lamb one year old, or two young doves? Would not a full-grown sheep, or an ox, have been a better token of man's gratitude and submission to Him? Or has God a preference for one animal more than another? But He is the Creator and Lord of all. It is He who said of all created things, that they were very good: "And God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good."[1] Nor is He in need of any of His creatures, as the Apostle says, for none of them could add anything to His infinite happiness. Therefore, why was the lamb for sacrifice to be a year old, and no older? Why were young and not old doves appointed as a substitute? To show (as in addition to many other things, the interpreters remark of this passage of the sacred Scriptures) that God, who is the beginning of all things, has an especial pleasure in the firstlings of His creatures, and desires them to be consecrated in

[1] Viditque Deus cuncta, quæ fecerat, et erant valde bona.—Gen. 1. 31.

a special manner to His service. This is proved by many of the laws that were given to the Jews; the first fruits had always to be offered to God. "Thou shalt carry the first-fruits of the corn of thy ground to the house of the Lord thy God."[1] He must have the first of wine, oil, food, and drink: "you shall separate first fruits to the Lord."[2] The first-born of animals were to be immolated to Him, nay, even the first of men were to be consecrated to Him. He said to Moses: "Sanctify unto me every first-born, as well of men as of beasts."[3] In the very beginning of the world, He regarded the sacrifice of Cain with displeasure and disgust. And why was that, since He accepted the sacrifice of Abel? St. Ambrose answers: "What Cain offered were not the first fruits; Abel, on the contrary, offered the first, not the second fruits."[4] And therefore the latter pleased Him, but not the former.

Even among men the first fruits are the best and most acceptable.

To speak plainly of the matter, my dear brethren, even amongst men, the first fruits are the most pleasing and acceptable. According to the general opinion, the first fruits that a tree bears are the best of the season. The first fruits even of common vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, pease and beans, may be set before the greatest lords, because they are the first fruits; although when these things grow older and larger they could not be served at table. A single handful of cherries, in the first of the season, is of more value, in reality and imagination, than a basketful at other times. What trouble do not flower gardeners give themselves, and how they boast, if they succeed in having the first of any kind of flowers!

Therefore God requires to be served, especially in the time of youth, because that is the best part of life

From this, my dear brethren, you will easily see my meaning, and how it is that God, although our whole lives belong to Him as to our last end, so that not a moment should pass without being devoted to His service, yet commands and requires of us, in a most special manner, to devote the time of our youth, from childhood upwards, to His love and honor. For, what are the years of youth but the beginning and first fruits of human life? They are the flower of life, as St. Augustine says, speaking to young people: "To you my words are addressed, oh, young people, who are in the bloom of life."[5] If all our thoughts, words, and actions are fruits, as of a tree planted by God, that we must offer to Him,

[1] Primitias frugum terræ tuæ deferes in domum Dei tui.—Exod. xxiii. 19.
[2] Separabitis primitias Domino.—Num. xv. 19.
[3] Sanctifica mihi omne primogenitum, tam de hominibus, quam de jumentis.—Exod. xiii. 2.
[4] Cain obtulit non a primis fructibus primitias Deo, Abel obtulit non secunda, sed prima.
[5] Ad vos mihi sermo est, O juvenes, flos ætatis!

then the works of youth are the first, and therefore the best and most pleasing that we can offer to God. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "A young man offers whatever he gives to God from the best part, the flower and vigor of his life;"[1] while, on the other hand, in later years, only old, dry, and half-withered fruits, so to speak, can be offered to Him. "An old man offers the dregs of his life,"[2] are the words of the angelic doctor. In youth we can offer that part of our lives which, according to the order of nature, is the purest and freest from vice; for then the knowledge of evil is generally less than in later years; the understanding is not so taken up and blinded by the false maxims of a vain world; the memory has less experience, and is therefore less disturbed by dangerous and lively images of deep-rooted habits; the will is simple and innocent and not inclined to evil; the evil desires of unlawful things are not so eager, because the forbidden pleasure has not been tried and experienced, so that they are like smouldering embers, without fire or flame; the conscience is in its first tenderness; the fear and terror of grievous sin, inspired by reason, have not yet lost their power; the shamelessness, with which crime is committed in later years, is still kept under by inborn modesty; the whole soul is adorned with the beautiful garment of sanctifying grace received in Baptism, from the first gifts of the divine favor and clemency, and the first efforts of the guardian angel's protecting care. What, then, could be more agreeable to that Lord, who, in the Old Testament, so expressly excluded unclean animals from being offered to Him in sacrifice, than the service of still unspotted innocence? How often has not the world experienced, in difficulties and dangers, that when an angry God refused to be appeased by processions, or fasting, or alms, He yielded at last to the prayers of little children, and moved with pity, restrained His hand from chastising?

And because it is usually the time of temptation.

I know well that this time of youth, unless looked after very carefully, does not remain long undefiled, and it is to effect this that the devil, the hated and envious enemy of God and man, directs all his efforts, that he may deprive the Almighty of what is most pleasing to Him, rob Him of the first fruits of life, and make them a sacrifice for hell; for if he succeeds in doing this, he may make pretty sure of the remaining years of life. Therefore, he lays many a private and public snare: sometimes he fills the minds of the young with wicked thoughts; sometimes he makes use of other young people of both sexes, who are already corrupt-

[1] Adolescens offert Deo de meliore vitæ suæ, de flore, de vigore. [2] Senex vero de fæce.

ed, to teach wickedness, by word and example, to those who are still innocent; sometimes he brings them into dangerous occasions or bad company, where they see and hear wickedness and sinful familiarities, by which they become corrupted and fascinated by the first taste of worldly pleasures and allurements. On this account the time of youth is not unaptly called the time of temptations and of combat. But from that very circumstance, it is evident that it is also something very precious and valuable, since the proud spirit of evil makes so many attacks on it, and tries so hard to overcome and conquer it.

We can give God a more pleasing service in youth.

And so, too, it is evident that they who remain true to God during their youth, and preserve their innocence, offer a most agreeable sacrifice to Him. It is no great proof of bravery for a soldier to fight from behind a wall, or where he cannot see his enemy; the real heroism consists in defending the honor of his king in the midst of the battlefield, with wounds and death on every side of him; then he can show how great are his love and fealty to his sovereign. What great wonder would it be if a man were to keep free from sin during a time of inward peace, when there is nothing to entice him to sin any more? What wonder is it for an old man, who has lost all taste for pleasure, to live a chaste, retired, and temperate life; for the near approach of death shows him the vanity of earthly joys, and directs his thoughts to eternity! But to fly and avoid sin in the time of temptation, when everything invites to sin, to love God in those years in which the freshness of youth inclines us to love creatures, to avoid dangerous occasions and bad company, when others of the same age invite us to go, to live temperately when others spend their time in drinking and gambling, to remain modest, humble, and chaste, although the fire of youth excites the majority to freedom, vanity, pride, and sensual pleasures; in a word, not to sin when sin is so easy, to serve God when there are so many temptations to abandon Him, that is a proof of solid virtue, and a sure sign that we really love God above all things. Hugo says, speaking of those who live piously during their youth: "Such as these offer to God a pleasing, perfect, and spotless sacrifice."[1]

God has a special love for the young.

Consequently, it is no wonder that they are loved most tenderly by the Almighty God, that He protects them with fatherly care, and bestows on them His choicest graces. They are like Benjamin, of whom the patriarch Jacob said: "The best beloved of the Lord shall dwell confidently in Him; as in a bride-chamber

[1] Tales offerunt hostiam viventem, Deo placentem, immaculatam.

shall he abide all the day long, and between His shoulders shall he rest."[1] What great tenderness, favor, and grace our Saviour showed to the young during His life on earth! The Holy Scriptures often testify to this. He said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me;" "and embracing them, and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them."[2] Who was it, of whom we read in the same chapter: "And Jesus looking on him, loved him?"[3] It was a young man, who came to Him and said: "Master, all these things (the commandments of God) I have observed from my youth."[4] Who was it whom Jesus loved most among the twelve Apostles?[5] Was it not John, the youngest and most innocent of all? Three persons Jesus raised from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus, and all of them were young. In a word, He had as much care for the young as for His own person: "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me."[6] And on the other hand, He threatens most severely those who give scandal to even the least of the little ones that believe in Him; it were better for them to have a millstone tied round their necks, and to be cast into the sea.[7] "O young people, who are in the bloom of age,"[8] I must repeat with St. Augustine, in concluding this first part; see, oh, young boy, oh, young girl! the flowers of age, how much God loves you! See how concerned He is for your salvation, and how much He desires to be served, honored, and loved by you! Can you then refuse to give Him this most valuable portion of your life, or could you deprive Him of it and give it to another? What a cruel injustice that would be! as we shall see in the

Second Part.

The time of youth is, generally speaking, squandered most shame-

Beautiful time of youth! Alas! I must now begin to complain; beautiful time of youth, how shamefully you are squandered, in our days, by the greater number! What a small share God receives as a sacrifice! As if this were the very time that

[1] Benjamin, amantissimus Domini, habitabit confidenter in eo; quasi in thalamo tota die morabitur, et inter humeros illius requiescet.—Deut. xxxiii. 12.

[2] Sinite parvulos venire ad me; et complexans eos, et imponens manus super illos, benedicebat eos.—Mark x. 14, 16.

[3] Jesus autem intuitus eum, dilexit eum.—Ibid. 21.

[4] Magister, hæc omnia observavi a juventute mea.—Ibid. 20.

[5] Discipulus, quem diligebat Jesus.—John xiii. 23.

[6] Qui susceperit unum parvulum talem in nomine meo, me suscipit.—Matth. xviii. 5.

[7] Expedit ei ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo ejus, et demergatur in profundum maris.—Ibid. 6

[8] O juvenes! flos ætatis.

fully and taken away from God.

might be squandered without scruple, without thought, without profit! As if these were the years that must necessarily be devoted to idleness, foppery, and ostentation, to gambling and drinking, to dancing and amusements and carnal love! As if this part of human life belonged especially to sinful lusts and to the service of the devil; as if it were a pity and a shame to devote the beginning of life to what the world calls the doleful business of attending to one's soul and practising virtue! As if, in a word, this part of life were too precious for God and for Heaven! Such is in fact the idea that has impressed itself upon many, that, namely, more liberty ought to be allowed to the young than to the old in these matters. Such is the opinion of friends, relatives, nay, even of parents themselves. The boy, the girl, they say, is still young, and can well be allowed some license. And old, prudent, and often sensible men and women speak in that way; what is the use of troubling about it, they say; when we were young we did the same (more is the pity!); what can we do to make matters better? We know well what young people are, (God help them if they are not good!), let them have their fling; when they grow older they will not find any more pleasure in such things (alas! that change will come too late!); the sooner they sow their wild oats, the better (and when the best part of life is gone, what remains is not worth much). Oh, what a pity it is that such a beautiful child has entered a convent (a pity that that beautiful soul goes to God, to Heaven? Hear, oh, Lord, what they say: it is a pity that any good thing should be sacrificed to Thee!); such is the vain discourse of the world. And young people use this vain talk to encourage each other; we are still young, they say, with the fool in the Book of Wisdom: "The time of our life is short,"[1] who knows how long it will last? "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present," we are still young; "let us speedily use the creatures as in youth." We are still young: "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments." We are still young: "Let not the flower of the time pass by us." We are still young: "Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered." We are still young: "Let no meadow escape our riot."[2] We are still young: "Let

[1] Exiguum est tempus vitæ nostræ.—Sap. ii. 1.

[2] Venite ergo, et fruamur bonis, quæ sunt.—Utamur creatura, tanquam juventute, celeriter.—Vino pretioso et unguentis nos impleamus.—Non prætereat nos flos temporis.—Coronemus nos rosis, antequam marcescant.—Nullum pratum sit, quod non pertranseat luxuria nostra.—Ibid. 6, 7, 8.

us everywhere leave tokens of joy; for this is our portion, and this our lot."[1] We can serve God afterwards.

How unjust this is to God.

Oh, accursed philosophy! What fiend has taught you to draw such false conclusions? How wrong, how unjust is your conduct towards your God, since you educate youth in that manner! How I pity your poor souls, that you treat so unmercifully! So that the best part of your life, in which you enjoy the best health and strength, in which you have the most time and the best opportunity, and the greatest freedom and liberty to serve God and to work for the salvation of your soul—since you are then free from all other cares, business, and hindrances, this part of your life, I say, is to be spent in that wretched manner; while for God, to whom you owe your whole life, you reserve your old age, or that part of your life in which everything will conspire against you, to keep you away from virtue and piety; for, bodily discomforts, which increase day by day; vicious habits and inclinations, that always grow stronger; the manifold cares of business and domestic concerns, which multiply as age advances; the evil customs and habits of the world, according to which you imagine you must live, and many other things besides, will arise to hinder or altogether prevent you from thinking of your soul. Is this the time, I ask you, that you reserve for God? Do you consider that honorable? St. John Chrysostom says, with astonishment: "If none of you would like to have an aged servant,"[2] nay, if you often dismiss your servants because they are too old, and hardly able to attend to their duties, and seek out others who are young and strong: "How much more does not God require the service of youth, so as to have the first fruits of life?"[3] How displeased, too, He will be: "If one who has exhausted the vigor of his youth in sin, gives only the residue and dregs of his life to virtue"?[4] The meaning of that is, that the pure gold is given to the world, the flesh, and the devil, while the dross is reserved for God; the devil gets the precious pearl, but the empty shell is given to God; the devil has the flour of the wheat, while God has only the husks and chaff; the devil gets the body while it is still vigorous, but God has no service from it until it becomes dried up and withered; the devil has the first roses of the spring,

[1] Ubique relinquamus signa lætitiæ; quoniam hæc est pars nostra, et hæc est sors.—Sap. ii. 9.

[2] Si nullus vestrum vult possidere servum senem.

[3] Quanto magis Deus vult adolescentiam, ut ejus vitæ primitias ambiat.

[4] Si quis, cum juventutem peccando exhauserit, enervatam senectutem ac vitæ fæcem virtuti reservet.

while God has only the withered leaves and thorns, which the devil did not care for; the first, rarest, and most beautiful fruits are offered to the devil, while those that have fallen from the tree and lie on the ground, half eaten away by the worms, are offered to God; that is to say, you offer to Him that service and love which misery and the fear of approaching death force from you. In a word, you wish to serve God when you are tired and wearied of serving the devil, and when you have lost all taste for sensual pleasures. That is not the way, as Hugo says, to offer a spotless young lamb, such as God wishes; such an offering consists rather of a foul swine.[1]

A great curse is therefore to be dreaded.

And what sort of welcome will you get when you come with such an offering? If the Lord has before now cursed those who kept the best of dumb animals for themselves, and brought the worse to be sacrificed: "Cursed is the deceitful man, that hath in his flock a male, and making a vow, offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord,"[2]—what a dreadful curse must they not expect, who deliberately intend to give nothing to God but the end of their lives, when the senses are dulled, although they promised in Baptism, by a solemn vow, to consecrate their whole lives to the service of God? I will say nothing of the danger you thus place yourself in, of not doing anything at all for your salvation (I shall speak of that on a future occasion), inasmuch as you wish to begin to live for God when you will perhaps have to leave this life. Have you never heard of that maxim of the jurists: "He who builds on another man's ground loses his building?"[3] You now wish to spend the years of your youth in forbidden joys and pleasures, and to defer the service of God until your old age. Ah, you are building on ground that does not belong to you; you let your eternal happiness depend on a time over which you have absolutely no control, and which God alone can give you, or withhold from you. I fear, therefore (and your fear ought to be much greater), that your imaginary spiritual edifice will come to nothing, and will be a complete failure. Read the narratives of the Holy Scriptures: they will show you plainly enough what becomes of edifices of that kind: there you will find two sons of the Patriarch Juda, Her and Onan, two of King David, Amnon and Absalom, two of the High-Priest Heli, Ophni and Phineas, all of whom were stricken by the hand of God in the midst of the vices of their youth, and thus had no time left

[1] Hi non offerunt agnum immaculatum, sed ut ita dicam, porcum curatum.

[2] Maledictus dolosus, qui habet in grege suo masculum, et votum faciens immolat debile Domino.—Malach. i. 14.

[3] Qui in alieno ædificat, amittit ædificium.

to work out their salvation. And it is much to be desired that the same unhappy fate may not be the lot of countless young people of the present day, for many of them are hurried away by an untimely and sudden death, or are suddenly deprived of their reason, or their wills become hardened and they grow obstinate in sinful habits, until they die impenitent, or otherwise end miserably. Such things, oh, God! are the instruments of Thy just anger, with which Thou punishest those who despise Thee in their youth and cast Thee off, and who determine to serve Thee only when they have, as slaves of the devil, completely satisfied their wicked appetites!

How foolish it is to do now what we must afterwards be sorry for.

And even if God had patience with you and allowed you to finish your building; to do penance, to amend your life, to serve Him in your old age and to go to Heaven, still, with all your good works, you cannot atone for the injuries you offered to God in your youth; for no matter how great your penance, how sincere your amendment, it still remains true and will remain true for all eternity, that you have shamefully offended God who loved you so much, who desired so much to be loved by you, and whom you will see and love in Heaven; for you have taken away from Him the best part of your life, your youth, and given it to the devil. This ugly stain will remain always; this truth cannot be upset by any amount of tears and repentance. When the penitent David thought of that, he cried out in grief and sorrow: "Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears."[1] Now, you children, who are still young, have it in your power to save yourselves from the necessity of ever having to weep in that way. How foolish it is to do now what you know very well will afterwards cause you to repent bitterly, if you wish to go to Heaven; or to do what, during a whole eternity, you must wish you never had done!

Conclusion for young people.

Therefore, you ought to draw a better conclusion from the sayings of the world; you ought to say: we are still young, our life is short, who knows how long it will last; come, therefore,[2] and let us do good, now that we can do it easily and at our convenience. We are still young, therefore let us make use of the favor we enjoy with our Creator. We are still young: let us then adorn our souls with virtues. We are still young: let us not squander this precious time of youth. We are still young: let us sacrifice ourselves to God before we get withered. We are still young: therefore let us give an example of innocence, purity,

[1] Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, lacrymis meis stratum meum rigabo.—Ps. vi. 7.
[2] Venite ergo.

piety, and the fear of the Lord in every church or house we enter, and in every place and company that we frequent. And so we shall give our whole hearts to Him alone who is worthy of possessing them, and who desires them so earnestly: "Son, give Me thy heart!"[1] Not a divided heart, not the last and worst part, but the whole heart. We are still young: let us then so live that we may not be cast into everlasting fire! We are still young: let us therefore so live that we may reign with God in Heaven! "For this is our fortune, this our happy lot;"[2] this is our only end and aim, and this too will be our eternal joy.

For parents. Christian parents! I ask of you now to recall to your memories all that you have ever heard of your obligation (and it cannot be preached to you too often) to offer your children to God from their very infancy, to bring them up for God and to keep them faithful to His service. What a great consolation and reward will be yours, if you do not fail in this duty! What an immense responsibility, and what a curse you will incur, if by your carelessness, negligence, foolish affection, by omitting the necessary instruction, correction, and watchfulness, or by bad example you prevent a single one of your children from serving God, and make him a slave of the devil. As was said before now of the Jews: And they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils![3] What a responsibility you will incur if, as often happens, when your children are inclined to virtue, to piety, or to the ecclesiastical state, you say or do anything to prevent them, or threaten or abuse them, or put obstacles in their way, like the disciples in the Gospel who tried to keep the children away from Christ. The Evangelist St. Mark says: "And the disciples rebuked those that brought them."[4] A rebuke that displeased our Lord very much. I have not time now to say any more to you on this point. Think of what I have said, and meditate on it every day.

For grown-up people who have spent their youth badly. From all this, I can draw only one conclusion for myself, and perhaps for many others of different ages and conditions, and that is, that I must cry out to Thee, full of sorrow and repentance: oh, my most merciful God, "The sins of my youth do not remember."[5] Oh, beautiful time of youth, what has become of thee! Where are the best years of my life gone? Alas, I cannot deny it; Thou, oh, Lord, hast had the least share of them! Hours and days have been spent mostly in useless play, in vanities,

[1] Præbe fili mi cor tuum mihi!—Prov. xxiii. 26. [2] Quoniam hæc est pars nostra, hæc est sors.
[3] Immolaverunt filios suos, et filias suas dæmoniis!—Psl. cv. 37.
[4] Discipuli autem comminabantur offerentibus.—Mark. x. 13.
[5] Delicta juventutis meæ ne memineris.—Ps. xxiv. 7.

sensual gratifications, fopperies, idleness, and impurity! The flower and vigor of my life I have given to Thy sworn enemy, although it belongs to Thee alone by right! Oh, Lord, "remember not the sins of my youth!"[1] How little have I regarded Thy commandments, although, in truth, it is not hard to observe them! How little have I regarded the malice of mortal sin, by which I have often done Thee the greatest injustice! How little have I valued my immortal soul, which I have so often sold for a momentary pleasure! How little I have done for Thy heavenly joys, which I have so heedlessly neglected! How little I have feared Thy threats of everlasting punishment, which I have so often deserved by my own deliberate act! My whole youth is lost, and I must say with St. Augustine: "I went about in my youth, and the more I grew in age, the more shameful did my vanity become."[2] Ah, most loving God, too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee! But it is done now. And what remains for me to do but, according to the advice of the Apostle, to make up for lost time by a greater zeal in Thy service, as far as it is possible for me to do so. Will I refuse Thee this too? Will I continue as I have begun? Will I still refuse to listen to Thy voice calling on me, "My son, give Me thy heart"?[3] Thou makest the same request even now. Hear, therefore, all ye who have not yet begun to love God as you ought, what the great Creator wants from us: My dear son, my dear daughter, give Me thy heart at last! You have left it long enough in the power of my enemy; am I never to find any place in it? You certainly do not wish to prefer the devil to Me; therefore, treat Me at least as you have treated him. Up to this I have not had full possession of your heart, which should belong to Me; let Me at least share with the devil, and have half of it. I have been obliged to look on while you were sacrificing the best part of it to him; give Me now, at least, the worst part of it, which is still left, and begin now to serve Me. No more, oh, my God! I am covered with confusion; I am sorry, really and sincerely sorry, that I have to make such a division of my heart between Thee and the devil. I am resolved to serve Thee in future, and not to defraud Thee of a single moment of my life. Ah, would that I could recall my youth—how much better would I now use it in Thy service!

[1] Delicta juventutis meæ ne memineris.
[2] Ibam in juventutem, quanto ætate major, tanto vanitate turpior.
[3] Præbe fili mi cor tuum mihi!

For innocent children.

Pious and still innocent children, how easily might I not envy your happiness! Yet I do not envy you, I rather feel a deeper sorrow at having so unjustly taken away that time, which I once had as you have now, from the God whom I now love above all things; and the more reason I have to congratulate you, who still preserve your first friendship with God, the more must I repent of my own misspent youth, and repent of it until the end of my life. The last request I make of you is to preserve your innocence unstained and to remain faithful to God. One day you will know what you do not perhaps yet understand, what a desirable and precious privilege it is to serve God from childhood and to preserve your innocence unstained to the end. Oh, what happiness, what joy, after ten, twenty, thirty years of this mortal life, to be able to say to the Lord, with the young man in the Gospel: "I have observed all these things from my youth!"[1] Thou, oh, God, hast desired the first bloom of my life: I have kept it for Thee. Thou hast wished for my love and fidelity: I have given them to Thee alone. Thou hast declared to me Thy law, according to which I must live pure, chaste, temperate, and pious: "I have observed all these things from my youth." The world, the flesh, and the devil have had no share in my life, nor shall they ever have any share in it. I am Thine from my childhood, I will be Thine to the end, Thine I will remain for all eternity. So should you resolve, children. So should all resolve, at least for the future. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Text.

Tulerunt illum in Jerusalem, ut sisterent eum Domino.—Luke ii. 22.

"They carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord."

The purest of Virgins is purified like an ordinary woman, the great God is presented as a servant, and redeemed by money. How wonderful the humility of both! It is the most Holy Virgin who offers, and it is the only begotten Son of God who is offered! Here is a subject for your pious meditation, my dear brethren. The Virgin Mother presents her only beloved Child in the Temple, the Child Christ gives Himself up completely to the will of His Father! What a beautiful lesson for us all! Learn from this

[1] Hæc omnia observavi a juventute mea.—Mark x. 20.

Mother, oh, parents, to bring up your children for God from their earliest years! Learn from this Child, oh, children, to give yourselves to the service of God from your youth; and learn all of ye who have misspent your youth, to bewail your sins. These and similar conclusions will be drawn from to-day's sermon, after I shall have proved that the time of youth is that which we must give to God in a most special manner; namely, to serve God in the time of youth, etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Holy Innocents:

Text.

Hi empti sunt ex hominibus primitiæ Deo, et Agno.—*Apoc.* xiv. 4.
"These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb."

Be attentive, Christian children, for this is your particular feast day! Those innocent children, who shed their blood for Jesus Christ in their infancy, teach you how you too must live piously and in innocence; hear, therefore, now, your duty and obligation, etc.—*continues as before.*

FOURTEENTH SERMON.

OUR AFTER LIFE DEPENDS ON OUR CONDUCT DURING YOUTH.

Subject.

According as a child is good or bad in his youth, so will he be when he grows up.—*Preached on the Feast of St. John the Baptist.*

Text.

Quis putas, puer iste erit?—Luke i. 66.
"What an one, think ye, shall this child be?"

Introduction.

Not without reason did the friends and neighbors of Elizabeth, as well as all who were in the hill-county of Judea ask each other this question about the newly-born John the Baptist: "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?"[1] "For the hand of the Lord was already with him." The extraordinary things that happened at

[1] Quis putas, puer iste erit?

his circumcision indicated something out of the usual course of events, and that was, that he should be, as the Angel said, "great before the Lord."[1] Nowadays, too, my dear brethren, parents ask the same question: what will this child be?[2] If you ask me what your child will be in and before the world, I must tell you that I know not, and neither do you know. But if you ask me what he will be before God and before Heaven, that I can tell you, although I am no prophet. See what the child is when he comes to the full use of reason, ask yourselves in what state you would wish him to be; so will he be hereafter. And that is what I undertake to prove in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

As a child is good or bad in his youth, so will he be when he grows up. That is the whole subject. Parents and children may learn therefrom: the former, in order that they may give their whole attention to the pious education of their children; the latter, that they may devote themselves in a special manner, during their youth, to piety and the fear of the Lord. If both these things were observed, the whole world would become holy.

That both may be observed by all here present, we beg of Thy grace, oh, Almighty God, through the intercession of the most Holy Mother of Thy only begotten Son, and that of the angels whom Thou hast given us as protectors, from our childhood upwards.

It is certainly not an infallible rule, that as the child is, so the man will be.

As the child is in his young days, so will he afterwards be. But, how can I say that without making any exception? Or, can I dare to assure those children, who are now good and pious, that they will certainly save their souls and go to Heaven? If that is the case, how is it that we are told to fear? "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."[3] He who is good and pious must take care that he does not become bad and wicked. No one is sure of final perseverance; no one knows for certain whether he is worthy of love or of hatred. *As the child is in his young days, so will he afterwards be.* Must I therefore take away all hope and courage from so many children who are now wicked and impious? Must I say that it is impossible for them to amend? Must I drive them to desperation and condemn them to hell for all eternity? If that is the case, why do we cry out so often in sermons: "Be recon-

[1] Magnus coram Domino. [2] Quis putas, puer iste erit?
[3] Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat.—I. Cor. x. 12.

ciled to God"?[1] Be converted! change your sinful life! In whatever moment the sinner does penance, he will find favor with God and will not die. The gate of mercy is closed on no one during this life. The laborers who came into the vineyard at the last moment, although they had spent the preceding part of the day in idleness, yet received their penny in the evening, as well as those who had borne the heat and burden of the day. It is all true, my dear brethren. It may happen, and has happened, that a child who is badly reared, and who has spent his youth in sin, becomes a good and pious man, and dies a happy death. Magdalen was a great sinner in her youth, and a great penitent in after life; Augustine was notoriously wicked in his youth, and became a model of holiness afterwards; the good thief on the cross was a murderer in life, and an heir to Heaven at the hour of death. And it is this thought that consoles me now, when I consider the multitude of depraved young people there are at the present day, and the great number of sinners; so that I need never despair of their conversion. It may happen, and has happened, that a well-reared child, who has spent his youth in piety, and the fear of the Lord, afterwards, through the wiles and deceits of the devil, through the allurements of the occasions of sin, or through bad company, becomes completely perverted and is lost forever. Saul was a pious youth, but a vicious and reprobate king. Solomon was wise and virtuous as a young man, and he became foolish, effeminate, and idolatrous in his old age. And it is this that draws from me tears and sighs of compassion, when I think that some begin their lives as pure and unsullied as angels, and end them defiled with sin like devils. And, therefore, I cannot affirm that what I said in the beginning is an infallible rule, or that it admits of no exception.

Yet, I maintain that, generally speaking, the way in which one lives in his youth is a good sign of how he will spend his after life; so that as he is good or bad in youth, he will be good or bad in after life, and at the hour of death. In order to prove to you the truth of this, of which, alas! so little is thought, I shall appeal to the infallible Word of God, to sound reason, and to undeniable experience. And, in the first place, why should the Holy Scriptures so often, so particularly, and so impressively hold forth the necessity of being careful of the time of youth, of being, during that time, especially on our guard against sin, and of practising virtue and having the fear of the Lord, if our sal-

Yet it is generally the case. Proved from Scripture.

[1] Reconciliamini Deo. -I. Cor. x. 20.

vation did not depend on that time? Why does the Prophet Jeremias say: "It is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth."[1] Why does the Wise Preacher say so earnestly: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."[2] Should we not then think of God and keep Him always before our eyes, every day of our lives? Is He not our Creator in old age, as well as in childhood, and does He not always deserve to be honored and loved by us? Without doubt; but this latter obligation will be fulfilled of itself, if the former is duly attended to; for, he adds in another place: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it."[3] If he walks in the way of virtue, he will, generally speaking, continue in it as long as he lives; if he enters on the broad way of vice, he will likely continue in it until death. How is it possible, asks the wise Sirach, for a man to find in his old age, what he did not seek or gather in his youth?[4] On the other hand, what is gained then, will never be lost. Son, hear learning from thy youth.[5] And why? "And thou shalt find wisdom in thy gray hairs;"[6] that is to say, thou shall preserve thy virtue. The whole book of Solomon's Proverbs consists of nothing else but similar advice and instructions to youth. And to what purpose is all this, if it is no great matter how one acts in his youth? Could we not accuse the Holy Scriptures of deceit and treachery, if the time of youth is not, generally speaking, an indication of what one's after life will be, or if it were an unusual thing for a man to continue the course of life he has begun and laid the foundation of in his youth?

From the nature of things.

And reason and experience prove this to be the case with almost everything. If a skillful man considers the beginning of anything, he is almost sure to be able to say how it will end. The morning dawn tells us what sort of weather we shall have during the day; according as the sky is pale or red at sunrise, any farmer, if you ask him, will tell you whether we shall have wind or rain. If it is clear and cloudless, it will remain so till evening. If you wish to know whether you will have a fruitful or an unfruitful year, look at the first blossoms that appear, and you will know, for it almost always depends on them. Last spring the

[1] Bonum est viro, cum portaverit jugum ab adolescentia sua.—Lam. iii. 27.
[2] Memento Creatoris tui in diebus juventutis tuæ.—Eccles. xii. 1.
[3] Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit, non recedet ab ea.—Prov. xxii. 6.
[4] Quæ in juventute tua non congregasti, quomodo in senectute invenies.—Eccl. xxv. 5.
[5] Fili, a juventute tua excipe doctrinam.—Ibid. vi 18.
[6] Et usque ad canos invenies sapientiam.—Ibid.

blossoms of the trees were destroyed in great part by the frost and snow; what will become of the cherries, apples, and pears? We have eaten them before now, and it is not of much consequence, as even the children could tell us. But there are few who are so indifferent as to the fate of the corn and vintage; if these get on well, there will be good hopes of a fair harvest. It is just the same with living creatures. A horse that is driven, when he is young, under a peasant's wagon, will never become a good riding horse. A lap-dog that spends its time lying down on a comfortable cushion will never make a good hunting dog. A young wolf can be tamed so as to follow you like a dog; but attempt it with an old one caught in the forest; it is and will remain wild. So true is the saying of the old poet: "A nettle stings early, when it intends to remain a nettle;"[1] and also that saying of the jurists: "The beginning is the most important part of everything."[2]

From the nature of man.

I know, my dear brethren, what you think of all this: these things are all lifeless or senseless creatures, they have not the gift of reason, they act through blind necessity, and are influenced only by instinct or by the guidance of others. But man has reason and free will, he can make choice of different modes of action just as he wishes and thinks fit, and he can change his manner of life whenever he pleases. That is true; but who does not know, who has not experienced the great power and influence that a deep-rooted custom has over our will, free though the latter is? "Habit is second nature"[3] is a well-known proverb. Habit drives us like a natural impulse, so that we can do easily and without any difficulty that to which we are accustomed; just as it would cost us a deal of trouble to abstain from doing it. That is especially the case when the habit is one that pleases our senses, and the contrary is irksome and disagreeable. It is no wonder, says Cardinal Hugo, that a poor peasant is contented and happy with his meal of hard beans and half rancid fat and coarse bread, which he washes down with spring water, for he is accustomed to such rude fare. But if a rich man were invited to eat such food, and were obliged to be content with it, he would find it hard enough and would have to leave the table without eating anything. And why? He has his free will, and he can use his teeth. Oh, he is accustomed to better things and cannot eat that coarse food. Tell a

[1] Urit matura, quod vult urtica manere. [2] Cujusque rei potissima pars principium est.
[3] Consuetudo est altera natura.

man who was once rich, but who is now poor, that he must go and dig and work and earn his bread like so many other poor people, who make no difficulty of doing so. Ah, he will say, like the man in the Gospel: "To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed."[1] And why? You have your free will. But, he will say, I am not used to it. As far as moral conduct is concerned, this is much more likely to be the case. The observance of the commandments of God, the refraining from unlawful pleasures, the flight of dangerous occasions, the practice of the necessary mortification and penance has long been a sweet yoke and a light burden to the pious man; while one who is accustomed to a vicious and sensual life finds in these things a fearful burden, an insuperable difficulty, and hence it is that so many despair of amendment, when they think that they must abstain from this or that sin their whole lives long. To do good after having learned to do evil is like trying to wash the blackamoor white, or to make the leopard change his spots,[2] as God says by the Prophet Jeremias. It is a hard thing to give up a habit. Now there are no habits so deeply rooted, so long retained, and so difficult to be abandoned as the habits we adopt in youth; for, since children have little experience, and a disposition untried by cares, with a clear head, a sharp memory, and a perpetual curiosity to see, hear, and learn something new, it follows that what children learn and experience (since everything is new to them) makes a deeper and more lasting impression on them, so that they can hardly forget it their whole lives long. Consequently, their good or bad inclinations, morals, and conduct grow up with them from year to year, and more frequently than not, accompany them to the grave. St. Jerome says of good morals that, as fresh wool generally keeps the first color it receives, so also the piety that is imbibed with the mother's milk in childhood, generally remains.[3] Sophar gives undeniable testimony about bad habits, when he says to his friend Job: "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust."[4]

From the general action of God.

The last proof is as follow: All that we have said hitherto depends on the help and assistance of God, who, as we have shown elsewhere, is cold towards the cold-hearted, generous towards the generous, and more especially does He show tenderness, love,

[1] Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco.—Luke xvi. 3.

[2] Si mutare potest Æthiops pellem suam, et pardus varietates suas, et vos poteritis benefacere, cum didiceritis malum.—Jerem. xiii. 23.

[3] Difficile eraditur, quod rudes animi perbiberunt.

[4] Ossa ejus implebuntur vitiis adolescentiæ ejus, et cum eo in pulvere dormient.—Job xx. 11.

and friendship towards those souls who give Him the best, the first and most agreeable part of their lives, that is to say, their youth, for He helps them with special graces in all dangers and temptations, that He may keep them from sin, or, if they fall through weakness, He helps them to rise again that they may continue to walk in the way of virtue to the end: on the other hand, they who, with the greatest injustice, sacrifice the flower of their lives to the devil and to sin, and reserve for God nothing but the crumbs, as it were, that are left over from the service of the devil, their bodies enfeebled by sin, and the scum and dregs of their lives, these God generally despises, leaves unassisted in danger and abandons to their own weakness, so that at last they become obdurate in wickedness, without fear and without love, and they die as they live, because they have not feared or loved in the time of their youth.

Example from the Sacred Scriptures.

I could bring forward a number of examples of both kinds, if I had time to do so, from the Holy Scriptures alone, such as Jacob, Joseph, Tobias, Eleazar, Susanna, etc., who were models of virtue and holiness amongst the Jewish people in their old age, and that, too, amid the most cruel persecutions and the greatest difficulties and temptations, and they remained so till death. Read their lives in the Sacred Scriptures and you will find that they were patterns of piety from their youth upwards, and that was the very thing that paved the way for them to the favor of God and the grace of perseverance. The examples of the other kind are almost numberless: read the history of the Kings in the Old Testament and you will see that after the death of Solomon, amongst his nineteen successors on the throne of Israel (an almost incredible thing), there was not one who was converted before his death. Amongst the kings of Juda who came after Solomon, there were only six out of nineteen who were good, all the others were wicked. Those who were good were so from the first; the others grew up in vice, and continued in it without any attempt at amendment, with the exception of Manasses, who was brought to his senses by his captivity.

Therefore we can judge of what children will be in old age, from what they are in youth.

On the strength of these proofs, I can repeat my proposition: *As a child is in youth, so will he, generally speaking, afterwards be during his life.* If I am asked, therefore, how such or such a child will get on; what do you think he will turn out when he grows up?[1] I should answer without hesitation, in the ordinary course of things, he will be then as he now is. The boy or girl who is now quiet,

[1] Quis putas, puer iste erit ?

modest, reserved, respectful, and obedient to his or her parents, who is never idle, is inclined to piety and the fear of God, hears Mass daily, is frequently at confession and communion, is regular in attending church in order to hear sermons, kneels down every morning and evening at home before a little altar to pray to God: who willingly reads and hears about holy things, is frightened at the thought of a mortal sin, and carefully avoids all bad company, no matter what may be the inducement to frequent it; what think you will that child become?[1] Oh, ye children who lead such angelic lives, continue as you have begun! Ye, O parents, rejoice; and all children, profit by that example, for they will become pious, God-fearing, zealous, and holy Christians and heirs of Heaven. The boy or girl who now shows no inclination or desire for piety, what will become of him or her?[2] They who now spend the whole day in running about the streets, with the greatest boldness and impudence, what will become of them? They who now are given to idleness and vanity, what will become of them? They who now look at or treat their mothers with disrespect, and dare murmur at them, what will become of them? They who now get up in the morning without blessing themselves, go to bed without saying their prayers, steal away from school or church, or laugh or talk if they are compelled to remain; what will become of them? They who now know better how to tell lies and to call upon the devil, than to praise and bless God; what will become of them? They who are more occupied with fishing and bird-catching than with their rosary beads, who carry about with them cards and dice, instead of their prayer-books, who read dangerous romances and love stories, instead of Thomas à Kempis, who listen to play actors, rather than to preachers, who visit drinking houses, instead of the houses of God, what will become of them? They who now rob their parents right and left, who spend more time and care adorning their bodies before the looking-glass, than in the confessional or at the communion table, adorning and decorating their souls, what will become of them? They who now spend their time at the window, looking at the passers-by, they who are willing to see and be seen, who go into the society of persons of the opposite sex, and do not avoid dangerous meetings, what will become of them? They who now waste their precious time, their parents' money, and their own best years doing nothing, or committing sin, what will become of them? Alas, these are unhappy but certain signs of a vain, idle,

[1] Quis putas, puer iste erit? [2] Quis erit?

spendthrift, unchristisn, and impious life ! What will they turn out in their old age ? Most probably they will be hardened and obdurate in their accustomed vices ! What will become of them at the hour of death ? Most probably, unless the divine mercy gives them some extraordinary grace, they will be impenitent sinners? What will become of them on the day of judgment? Most probably they will be amongst the goats, on the left hand ! What will become of them during eternity? Most probably they will be fuel for hell and will burn there with the great majority of men? Yes, that will be their lot, if what the Holy Ghost says of the general course of things is true: "A young man, according to his way, will not depart from it when he is old." [1] Oh, blindness of youth, that makes so light of these things, and thinks so little of them, that those years on which eternal happiness or misery generally depends are spent so badly! The more I think of it, the less do I wonder at that terrible truth, "Many are called, but few are chosen." [2]

Exhortation to parents.

Oh, parents, you can best prevent this misfortune ? As children behave in their youth, so, generally speaking, do they remain during their lives ; but how children behave in their youth, depends much, if not mostly, on you, so that they are and will be what you wish them to be. That land, capable of cultivation, brings forth good or bad crops, depends much on the way it is cultivated ; if you sow thistles, you can never expect to reap wheat. That a young bird learns to sing well or badly, depends on the way in which it is taught in the beginning: a nightingale would never learn to sing sweetly with an owl for its master. The young crab will never learn to walk forwards, if it sees the old one always going backwards. In the same way, the good or bad conduct of your children is the consequence of the good or bad example you give them. Think, then, of that, and see what an amount of good or evil you may do, not only to your own children, but to your children's children, and all your posterity. Ask yourselves often: How will my son or my daughter turn out? [3] If we do not plant the good seed by instructions, warnings, and continual exhortations to virtue and the fear of the Lord, or when we are unable to do this ourselves, if we do not see that our children are properly instructed and educated by others ; what will become of them? They will be like uncultivated ground, overgrown with thorns and thistles: they will be ignorant of what concerns their last end, God and Heaven. If our

[1] Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit, non recedet ab ea.
[2] Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xxii. 14. [3] Quis putas, puer iste erit?

children hear the servants at home, or their own father and mother sometimes, cursing, swearing, backbiting, indulging in impure conversation, singing unchaste songs; if they seldom hear of God, unless when His name is dishonored and blasphemed, what will become of them?[1] They will soon sing to the same tune, and follow the example of their elders. If they see anything in our conduct that young eyes should not behold, if they notice that their father and mother are slothful and lazy in the service of God, that the one is passionate, avaricious, or intemperate, while the other is given to idleness, vanity, and pride, and goes about immodestly dressed, or is not careful of her company; what will become of them? They will walk backwards like the young crab, and follow the evil example of their parents. If we are not always watchful over them, if we are sparing of the rod and of parental correction when they do wrong, or if, in place of punishing them, we curse or swear at them, as many parents do; if we do not guard them against every occasion of seeing wickedness, or of hearing or thinking evil; if, under the pretext that they are still young, we allow them to sleep together, or with the servants, without distinction (oh, parents, what a dangerous thing that is! more so than I can now tell you); if, when they grow older, we allow them to go and walk where, and with whom, and as long as they please; how will they turn out? Ah, certainly not well! The beautiful souls that God gave us to bring up for Him and to lead to Heaven, will be lost forever. These thoughts, and such as these, should be constantly in the minds of parents, they should reflect on them daily, and use the proper means to prevent any evil from happening to their children, with the full persuasion and conviction that, if they fulfil their duty in this particular, a great deal more good will result from it, than from all their other duties and cares. Christian parents, think well on it! When you go to confession, it is not enough for you to see whether you have lived as good or bad Christians: you must examine your consciences carefully to see whether you have been good or bad parents, whether you have properly fulfilled the duties of a father or mother. If you fail in this, I would not give a straw for all your other pious practices and good works. If you have no sins of your own, remember, as St. Ambrose and Origen say, that the sins of your children and of those who are subject to you, will be imputed to you, in so far as you have given occasion for them, or not prevented them

[1] Quis erit?

when you could have done so.[1] If you have good and pious children, thank God for it, and keep them pious, consoling yourselves with the thought that you will have a share in their good works, as well as in their eternal reward, which they must ascribe to you, after God. If you see that they are inclined to evil, correct them, while there is still time, in their youth. If they do not obey you, you have done your duty, and they must blame themselves for their own destruction.

To children.

And you, oh, children, I beg and implore of you: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth!"[2] Give to your most loving God that part of your lives which He particularly desires and asks of you; that part on which, generally speaking, your eternal happiness or misery depends! If God has given you good parents, who bring you up well, look upon it as a great grace, which many have not; follow their instructions and example with unceasing reverence, love, and obedience, persuaded that you can never make them a sufficient return for what they are doing for you. If they fail in their duty, although I pity your souls, still you are not, therefore, to be excused if you do not practise the fear of the Lord and hatred of sin, by always avoiding dangerous occasions, and thus supply what is wanting to you in parental instruction. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth," and often ask yourselves, What shall I be at the end of my life? An angel in Heaven, or a devil in hell? I must be one or the other. God preserve me from the latter fate! I will strive for the former and begin early to do so. Every morning and evening, I will offer up and recommend my youth to the Blessed Virgin and to my guardian angel, so that they may help me to keep it faithfully for God. Every day I will ask of God in humble prayer, Oh, Lord, keep me always in Thy love! Let me rather die in my childhood than offend Thee by a mortal sin! And I will try to obtain that grace by frequenting the sacraments, by hearing Mass every day, and by hearing sermons and instructions.

To other hearers.

All you others present, who have either passed the years of your youth in innocence and piety, or after having committed many sins, have at last changed your lives and commenced to live as Christians, praise and bless the mercy of God for the extraordinary grace you have received, and make a firm resolution to remain faithful to Him to the end. I must class myself amongst these latter, and say from my heart, with St. Augustine:

[1] Omnia, quæ deliquerint filii, de parentibus requirentur.—Origen.
[2] Memento Creatoris tui in diebus juventutis tuæ.

Accursed be the darkness in which I wandered in my youth! Accursed the blindness that kept me from seeing the light of Heaven! Accursed my ignorance and folly, through which I have so little known, so little loved Thee, oh, God of love and beauty! I thank Thee, oh, Almighty Lord, for having shown such patience in bearing so long with my sins, and for the light by which Thou hast enabled me to see and to love Thee! The remainder of my life shall be spent in bewailing the sins of my youth, and in serving Thee with constant zeal; so that, at the hour of death, when I ask myself, what will become of my soul in eternity, my conscience may console me, and answer that I shall become an heir to the kingdom of Heaven. May God grant that grace to us all. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Epiphany:

Text.

Vidimus stellam ejus in Oriente, et venimus adorare eum.— Matth. ii. 2.

"We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him."

How quick the obedience of the three holy kings! We have seen His star, and as soon as we saw it we set forth at once, in order to pay Him our obedience and respectful homage. If these three Wise Men had delayed long, after having seen the star in the East; if they had deferred the toilsome journey, or given it up, as other people did in the same country, because they did not know where to find the Saviour; or if they had allowed themselves to be detained by King Herod in Jerusalem, they certainly would not have had the great privilege of seeing Jesus, the Saviour of the world, of knowing Him and adoring Him. Christian children, you are still in the East, that is to say, in the dawn of youth. The Divine Star has risen for you, as soon as the use of reason has brought you to the knowledge of the true God. How many of you can now say, with the three holy kings: "We have seen His star, and are come to adore Him;"[1] from the time that we began to know our Creator, we have served Him as we ought? Oh, happy souls who can say so, continue as you have begun; you will see God your Saviour in eternity. But, alas, how many of you, perhaps, who after having known the true God, have allowed yourselves to be betrayed by a Herod, to be

[1] Vidimus . . . et venimus.

led into error, to be robbed of your innocence and of God and His grace by sin? Alas, how I pity you! How I fear that if you continue as you have begun, during your youth, the star of grace will never rise on your amendment. I have already shown that we are bound to serve God especially during the time of youth, because then our service is most pleasing and desirable to Him; so that he who refuses this service acts very unjustly towards God. Now I must present this subject in another light, and I say: Children, serve God from your childhood and from early youth. If you refuse to do so, you will have a great difficulty in doing it afterwards, and will lose God forever. And why? As the child, etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction for the Sunday in the Octave of the Nativity of Our Lord:

Text.

Futurum est enim ut Herodes quærat puerum ad perdendum eum.—Matth. ii. 13.

"For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, had hardly commenced, as a child of one year old, to bless the world with His presence, when the bloodthirsty Herod conceived a design on His life, so that He was obliged to take refuge in Egypt. Christian children, who have, up to this, spent the flower of your age in innocence, and have still kept your first favor and friendship with God, I congratulate you a thousand times from my heart! Continue as you have begun; but be cautious even in your youthful years, for there is a bloodthirsty Herod on the watch for your souls, in order to destroy them. The hellish foe tries all sorts of snares and deceptions in order to rob you of your first innocence and of the flower of your youth, and, unless you are careful in the midst of so many dangers, and often take to flight, it will be all up with your souls, and perhaps they will be lost for eternity. I have already shown, etc.—*continues as before.*

ON THE
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS.

FIFTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE RESPECT THAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS.

Subject.

1st. Children ought to respect their parents. 2d. Many are guilty of great neglect herein.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Et erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 51.
"And He was subject to them."

Introduction.

Who was subject? asks St. Bernard, treating of this passage. Jesus Christ, the all-wise and all powerful Son of God! To whom was He subject? To a poor Mother and to a carpenter! In what was He subject to them? In the lowliest and most abject domestic employments! How was He subject? With profound humility and reverence, ready and willing to obey them. How long was He thus subject? Up to His thirtieth year, for during that time we read nothing of Him except: "He was subject to them."[1] St. Augustine exclaims: "Children, learn to be subject to your parents,"[2] for He who rules Heaven and earth, was subject to His parents. Up to this, oh, Christians, I have shown you how to behave towards God; namely, that you are to serve Him from childhood and to persevere constantly in His grace. Learn now how you are to behave towards your parents, if you wish to be good children. And how is that? I do not want to increase the number of the commandments, nor to make them more difficult than they are. Such is the well-known command: "Honor thy father and thy mother."[3] And here the matter may rest. But, in

[1] Erat subditus illis. [2] Discant pueri, subdi parentibus.
[3] Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.—Deut. v. 16.

what does this honor consist? St. Bonaventure divides it into three kinds of obligations, and thus supplies me with the subjects of the three following exhortations. He says: "There is an honor of love, an honor of respect, and an honor of submission, or obedience."[1] I shall take the second of these as my subject to-day, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Christian children, you owe the honor of respect to your parents. That will be the first part. There are many children who are guilty of great neglect herein. Such will be the second part. Do not think, my dear brethren, that I am going to speak only of little children who are still under the government of their parents; I speak to all of you who are grown up, and even married, no matter what may be your age, condition, or position, who still have parents alive. Those whose parents are dead may also, perhaps, hear something that will move them to repentance, so that they may atone to their dead parents, by their prayers and suffrages, for the faults they committed against them when living.

Christ Jesus, Thou who gavest to all children an example of the respect they owe their parents, impress upon all children, by Thy grace, the same respect towards their parents, through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, and of our angels guardian!

First Part.

Parents hold the place of kings and princes to their children.

The reverence and respect that subjects owe their prince or king, belong also to his ambassadors and representatives, who, being sent in his name, act in his stead; and any insult or injury offered to them, is looked upon as affecting the prince or king; for, although the former are of lowlier descent and have less authority, yet we must not consider their persons, as much as the dignity of him who has sent them to act in his place. This right is maintained among all nations of the world. But why do I bring forward kings and princes, my dear brethren, when I have only to speak to children about their duty towards their parents! Because it is necessary that you should understand, from the beginning, how high and important a duty it is that I am about to explain to you. Your fathers, oh, children, your mothers, no matter what may be their condition, quality or character, hold in your regard the place of prince, king, and potentate. In early times, before there were any properly constituted states in the world, and be-

[1] Est honor dilectionis, est honor reverentiæ, est honor obsequii : seu obedientiæ.

fore the earth was divided into countries, provinces, kingdoms, and governments, there were no lawful rulers, except the fathers and mothers in their households. And this arrangement was according to nature and reason; for, to whom did the chief authority in a household properly belong, if not to the master and head of the house? When the population of the world increased, it became necessary to establish some superior authority, to preserve due order, and each country had a king or prince placed over it to govern it; yet, as far as the family is concerned, the authority and supremacy of parents is not in any degree lessened. The only difference is that kings and princes have to act as fathers of the whole nation, while parents have to fulfil that office only for their own family and household. These are the express words of the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiasticus: "He that feareth the Lord, honoreth his parents, and as his masters will serve them that brought him into the world."[1] And St. Thomas Aquinas says even more than this: "Because under God we have received our being from our parents, we should honor them more than if they were merely our masters."[2]

Nay, even as occupying the place of God Himself.

Yet we have not said enough up to this. Your fathers and mothers, oh, children, represent the Almighty God Himself! Hear what St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "The father holds the place of God to his children."[3] A heathen philosopher was once asked if one's parents should be honored. What! said he, even that very question is reprehensible; for even if there is anything like the divinity upon earth, it does not deserve more respect or reverence than one's father and mother do; because there is nothing amongst men that so closely resembles the God-head, as that which is to be found in one's parents, since the Creator has given them a share in His greatest perfections, namely in His paternal fruitfulness, His almighty power, His love and His authority. Therefore, in former times, the most honorable titles were given to parents; they were called "visible gods,"[4] and as Plato says, "creators of a secondary order,"[5] whom the great Creator has sent on earth in His place. This too is the reason why the command, "Honor thy father and thy mother,"[6] is placed immediately after the first three commandments which concern the honor and adoration of God. As if God wished to

[1] Qui timet Dominum, honorat parentes, et quasi dominis serviet his, qui se genuerunt.—Eccl. iii. 8.

[2] Quia esse habemus ab eis, debemus magis revereri, quam dominos.

[3] Liberis suis pater vice Dei est. [4] Dii visibiles. [5] Creatores secundarii.

[6] Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.

say to us: The first thing, oh, man, that thou must do on earth, is to adore, honor, and love thy God, and the next thing is to honor thy father and mother above all thy fellow-men. Tertullian calls this commandment, "A second religion, or adoration after that which is due to God."[1] And, consequently, if we follow the order of the commandments, the next greatest sin after idolatry is to fail in paying due honor to our parents. Thus, oh, children, you owe to your parents the same respect that subjects give to kings and princes; nay, that creatures give their Almighty Creator, observing, of course, the due proportion.

What great respect subjects have for their princes.

Now how do subjects respect their sovereign? Go into a royal palace, and see how things are carried on there; see how politely, how respectfully, how humbly even the highest ministers and officials meet their royal master, how they bow down before him, if he only speaks a word to them, how respectfully and attentively they hear his commands, how quiet and still they are, although they may be only in the antechamber, and not actually in presence of their sovereign; how careful they are in speaking of him even outside the court, so that not a disrespectful word may be said of him, and not even a doubtful expression may fall from them that would be in the least derogatory to the honor of their royal master. And that is right and proper. For, as Christ says, speaking of all superiors: "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me."[2]

God requires still greater honor from His creatures.

Oh, God of majesty! if Thou commandest honor to be paid to those who represent Thee on earth, what sort of reverence ought Thy creatures to pay to Thine own Infinite Greatness? If we could only catch a glimpse of Thy heavenly court, in which Thou showest Thyself on Thy throne of glory, then should we see thousands and thousands of the heavenly princes, as Daniel saw them, covering their faces and bending their knees through respect, and trembling with awe at the majesty of Thy presence! That we, my dear brethren, show such little honor to God, who is present everywhere, but especially in our churches, is to be attributed (alas, that I should have to say so!) either to our weak faith, or to the fact that we do not know how to pay proper respect to so great a Lord. And it is of that that the Lord complains by the Prophet Malachy: "The son honoreth his father, and the servant his master, and if I be a father, where is my honor?"[3] Mark those words, Christian children! From them you can form

[1] Secundum a Deo religionem. [2] Qui vos spernit, me spernit.—Luke x. 16.

[3] Filius honorat patrem et servus dominum suum; si ergo pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus.—Malach. i. 6.

some idea of the honor you owe your parents. For, when God complains of being deprived of the honor due to Him, He reminds us of His title of Father, as if the title of Benefactor, Creator, King of Heaven and earth, and God, that is, infinite good, were not sufficient to let us see the great injustice done by depriving Him of the honor due to Him. "If I am a father," He says, "where is my honor?"[1]

Children owe the same respect to their parents: they must honor them in all things.

From this you may understand what a great esteem and respect you should have for the name and dignity of a father or a mother. For that esteem and respect resemble, not merely that which subjects pay to kings and princes, but even that which the Most High God demands from His creatures. The wise Ecclesiasticus tells us of what kind it must be: "Honor thy father in work and word and all patience."[2] In everything you do, in his presence, whether at home and in private, or abroad and in company; in all your outward behavior, in standing up and sitting down, you must show, with proper humility, what a great respect you have for your father and mother, and how you love and esteem them. Such was the conduct of the patriarch Joseph, even when he was Viceroy of Egypt; he went out to meet his aged father Jacob, with great pomp and magnificence, and served him with great humility to the end of his days, so that as a shepherd, such as he was before, he could not have shown his father greater reverence. Solomon, the greatest king of the earth, whose glory and riches were never equalled and never will be, whom kings and queens admired on account of his wisdom, as soon as he saw his mother Bethsabee coming towards him, in the words of the sacred Scriptures: "The king arose to meet her and bowed to her; and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."[3] The wisest king of the whole world wished thereby to show that even a crowned head must bow down in presence of those who gave him being.

In all words.

"In all thy words honor thy father"[4] and mother, inasmuch as you must always listen to them with respect, and never interrupt them; you must never oppose your opinion to theirs, and must submit to their judgment in all things lawful; you must never contradict them by the least word, or if a contradiction is required, you must offer it with a loving respect, and without

[1] Si ergo pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus.

[2] In omni opere et sermone, et omni patientia honora patrem tuum.—Eccl. iii. 9.

[3] Surrexit rex in occursum ejus, adoritque eam; positusque est thronus matri regis, quæ sedit ad dexteram ejus.—III. Kings ii. 19.

[4] In omni sermone honora patrem tuum.

giving the least sign of ill-humor, displeasure, or contempt, although you may think you understand the matter better than they. You must be particularly careful not to say anything in the presence of others, that would in the least detract from the honor due to them, and you must excuse their faults as best you can, and put a charitable interpretation on them.

In all patience.

Finally, you shall honor your parents in all patience,[1] bearing with their weakness, their infirmities, their old age and their troubles; although they may be poorer, simpler, and lowlier than you now are, still you must never forget the childlike reverence you owe them, for they still represent the person of Him who says: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me."[2] If they have become almost childish, and have lost the use of reason through old age, nevertheless, says Ecclesiasticus, you must bear with them patiently and respectfully: "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life, and if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength."[3] For, whatever faults and imperfections your parents may be subject to, whatever their dispositions may be, they are still your father and mother, to whom, under God, you owe your being, and whom you must consequently treat with all possible respect. Nay, even if your parents were wicked, impious, given to drunkenness, spendthrifts, passionate or cruel, you still owe them childlike love and respect. If they have reared you badly, wasted your substance through idleness or folly, dragged you down to poverty and wretchedness, and, as one would think, thus lost all claim to your love and respect, still you are not excused before God, if you fail in paying them that respect. For, if the love that we owe to God binds us to forgive our worst enemy, who gives us reason to hate and detest him, and if it commands us to love him and do good to him, much more does the honor that we owe the Most High God, bind us to honor our parents, although, by their bad conduct, they may appear to have lost all claim to respect and reverence. This honor, then, we must pay them, because such is the will of Him who is always worthy of having His holy will fulfilled by us in the most perfect manner. At the same time, since children are bound to do all they can to further their parents' salvation, they are not forbidden to remonstrate with their parents when

[1] In omni patientia honora patrem tuum. [2] Qui vos spernit, me spernit.

[3] Fili, suscipe senectam patris tui, et non contristes eum in vita illius, et si defecerit sensu, veniam da. et ne spernas eum in virtute tua.—Eccl. iii. 14, 15.

necessary, nor do they sin against filial respect by doing so; on the contrary, they are bound to do it when there is reason for believing that good will come of it. Thus they might try to wean their father or mother from the habit of cursing, or drinking, and from other vices, by remonstrating with them gently and respectfully; but, if they can do no good in that way, they must keep quiet, and pray that God may give them the grace of amendment, and think to themselves at the same time: I, at least, will do my duty as a child, according to God's will, and will show my parents, such as they are, all honor in word and work, with all patience. In a word, there are no circumstances under which a child can be dispensed from paying due honor to his father or mother. Canon and civil law mention different ways in which a child may be released from the parental authority, and become his own master, but neither canon nor civil law, nor any human power, can exempt a child from the obligation of honoring his parents to the last moment of his life. The divine command is there, and it will remain forever: "Honor thy father and thy mother."[1] Ah, Christian children! How many of you are there in Christian families, who fulfil this great and strict commandment as it ought to be fulfilled? Hear the complaint that I have to make in the

Second Part.

Many children sin against this.

Children are called, "the crown of their parents."[2] But what a difference amongst them! Some may be said to place a heavy leaden crown on their parents' heads, others a crown of thorns, others a crown of roses, but with sharp thorns sticking out through it here and there; and how few children there are of whom their father or mother could say with truth, as far as filial reverence alone is concerned, in the words of St. Paul: You are "my joy and my crown,"[3] and the only consolation of my life? How many, on the contrary, of whom their parents might well say with Isaias: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me"?[4] I have reared my children, and fed them, and given them a position in life, but they have despised and dishonored me!

Who forget the respect due to their

And such is the case, first with those children who do not show proper respect to their parents in words; who are ill-humored

[1] Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam. [2] Corona parentum.
[3] Vos estis gaudium meum, et corona mea.—Philipp. iv. 1.
[4] Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me!—Isai. i. 2.

and peevish, who contradict them, look crossly at them, spit at, or put out their tongues at them, or grind their teeth at them; who treat them rudely and with bad temper, who answer back, murmur, and will not let themselves be punished or warned; who mock at their aged parents, and make fun of their old-fashioned ways and simple manners; who forget the respectful name of father and mother, and call their parents old man, or old woman, or in any other way address them disrespectfully. So also, they who speak publicly against their parents' honor, and make known their faults and imperfections, their eccentric manners, their vices and bad habits, for the mere purpose of complaining of them. It is a foul bird that defiles its own nest. It is a great honor, indeed, for a child, that his father and mother have a bad name amongst strangers, or in their own neighborhood! Such children should be called, as Christ called the Pharisees: "Serpents, generation of vipers;"[1] you ought to protect the honor and good name of your parents with your lives, and instead of that, through a childish talkativeness, or, what is still worse, through ill-humor or a desire of revenge, you take away the best thing in life, namely, a good reputation from those who have given you your natural life! Still more grievous are the sins of those who are not afraid to call their parents by nicknames or to abuse them or curse them to their face. Many parents must hear from their children, when they wish to correct them, or keep them away from evil, expressions that they would not tolerate in one of their servants. This sin is so abominable in the sight of God, that He lays a special curse on it, by the mouth of the Wise Man: "He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness."[2]

parents in words.

Ye parents may say: We have fed children and brought them up, but they have despised and dishonored us![3] And this is done also by those children who fail in paying proper respect to their parents through impatience. If a father or mother is enfeebled by illness or old age, and is peevish and sensitive, and requires his or her children to perform the duties of servants, oh, what sour looks, what sharp words the poor parents get! Their children look on them as a heavy burden tied round their necks, from which death alone can free them; they complain and lament

Who dishonor them by impatience.

[1] Serpentes et genimina viperarum.—Matth. xxiii. 33.

[2] Qui maledicit patri suo et matri, exstinguetur lucerna ejus in mediis tenebris.—Prov xx. 20

[3] Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me!

and say that they cannot put up with it any longer! No matter what they do for their parents, they cannot please them; they get angry for a trifle; they would wear out an iron patience; an angel could not please them, they are so ill-humored, etc. What! Do you, their child, dare to complain of them in that way? Is it your own father and mother whom you say you cannot please? Either they have cause to complain of you, and to be vexed and displeased with you, or they have not. If they have cause, why do you complain of them? The whole fault lies with you, for you do not do your duty, nor fulfil your obligations. If they have no reasonable cause for complaint, are you therefore justified in showing displeasure towards them, or in refusing them your services? You should rather have pity on them, when they are old and feeble and unable to help themselves, or if this is not the case with them, the respect you owe them should remind you that their obstinacy and ill-temper furnish you with an excellent opportunity of proving your patience and increasing your merit. You should remember that the cause of this over-sensitiveness and ill-humor in your parents is often the care and trouble that they had on your account, which Tertullian calls the cross of married people. How much anxiety often occurs in a family, so that the best tempered are driven distracted by it? And yet, they undergo this anxiety for your sake, to help you on and give you a position in life. If, then, your father or mother is sometimes ill-humored or angry, or breaks out into passionate words, should you not bear it with patience? You must remember that they had a great deal of trouble with you in your childhood, before they brought you so far that they might expect you to serve and wait on them. Is it not just, then, that you should bear something for their sake, if they are sick, or aged, or so feeble that they are in a state of second childhood? The Wise Sirach says to all children: "Make a return to them as they have done for thee."[1] Repay them for what they have done for you.

Who are ashamed of them

I have fed children and brought them up, but they have despised me![2] Such is the complaint, finally, that many parents, with perfect justice and in great bitterness of heart, might make of their children who are wanting in filial respect. And such children are they who, being raised to a higher and more prosperous condition, are ashamed of their father and mother, because they are poor, needy, and of lowly birth; who put their parents al-

[1] Retribue illis, quomodo et ille tibi.—Eccl. vii. 30.

[2] Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me!

ways in the background, do not like to be with them in strange company, grow red and pale if anything is said of them, turn them out of the room if strangers come to visit at the house, and keep them out of sight; as if they wished to say with Peter, as they in reality do: "I know not the man;"[1] which are the words of Peter when he was asked about Christ. What! Do you not know those who gave you being? Do you not know her whose milk has nourished you? Are you ashamed of those who have lifted you out of the mud, and brought you so far, that you are now what you are? Are your parents too humble for you? If they had not taken care of you when you were younger, if they had not had so much trouble on your account, that they might bring you up and instruct you, what would you be now? Your father and mother may be poor and simple-minded, still they are your father and mother, and, therefore, you must honor them. There is a wooden crucifix over there; must you not reverence it? Certainly, you will answer, yes! But it is made of common wood. Oh, that is nothing, you will answer; it represents my crucified Redeemer as well as if it were made of gold and silver; it is not the material, but the mystery it represents that I have to consider. And you are quite right. But in just the same manner you ought to respect your parents, whether they are rich or poor, whether they are adorned with silver and gold, or are poorly clad; for in whatever condition they may be, they are your father and mother, and they represent to you the person of Jesus Christ.

Who allow their parents to wait on them as servants.

What shall I say of those children who keep their needy parents in their houses, but treat them as servants, and not as their father and mother; who allow them to wait and attend on them without ever giving them even a friendly look? An old servant maid has often more to say in the house than the old mother. If there is anything left over after meals, it is good enough for the latter; if the son or daughter is displeased or out of sorts, the poor mother has to bear the sour looks, and to hear even sharper words than a servant. Sometimes she can hardly dare to speak to her son or daughter without fear and trembling. Truly, it is a sore trial for a father or mother to be dependent on the grace and mercy of such children! Bitter indeed is the bread that must be earned and eaten in such bitterness of heart! The innocent Joseph told two kinds of dreams to his father, as we read in the Book of Genesis. His father reproved him for only one of them.

[1] Non novi hominem.—Matth. xxvi. 72.

The first was that he saw how the eleven sheaves of his brothers bowed down before his, wherein he prophesied that he should rule over his brothers. To this Jacob said nothing. The second dream was that the sun and moon adored him. Jacob could not bear this, and cried out with indignation: "What meaneth this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother worship thee upon the earth?"[1] What are you thinking of? You are our son; how can you rule over us? With the same reproof Christ reduced the Pharisees to silence, when they said that the Messias was the son of David: "If David, then, call him Lord, how is he his son?"[2] And they could not answer Him anything. Christian children, I ask you too, must your parents treat you as their masters? How then are you their children, and they your father and mother? They have a right to expect you to attend on and serve them, but you can have no such right over them. St. Peter Damian writes to Albert, a nobleman, who through love of his wife, neglected his mother: "Think how cruel it is to treat with contempt those from whom you have received your very existence."[3] With what great humility should you not submit, then, to those to whom you owe your life!

They who beat their parents, or threaten to do so.

Finally, what shall we say of those unnatural, or rather brutal children, who forget the respect due to their parents so far as to raise their hand against them and threaten to strike them, or actually do so? But it can hardly be possible that there are such children in the world; for, when I think the matter over, I almost find myself compelled to agree with the heathen philosopher, who, being asked why it was that among so many laws there was none to forbid children from threatening to strike their parents, answered: There is no such law because hitherto no one has ever thought it possible that there could be such unnatural children in the world, who would think of committing such a grievous crime. But, alas! that very law that was looked upon as unnecessary amongst blind heathens, how necessary would it not now be among Christians, since there are children who dare to commit that crime! Oh, great God, how does such a crime appear in Thy sight! If the eye, that looks scornfully on father or mother, deserves, according to Thy curse, to be torn out and devoured by ravens, what should be done to

[1] Quid sibi vult hoc somnium? Num ego et mater tua adorabimus te super terram?—Gen. xxxvii. 10.

[2] Si ergo David vocat eum Dominum, quomodo filius ejus est?—Matth. xxii. 45.

[3] Perpende, quantæ crudelitatis sit, illos despiciendo contemnere per quos habes et ipsam esse.

the impious hand that dares to raise itself against father and mother to strike them? If Ruben lost his birthright and his priesthood, because he was disrespectful to his father Jacob; if Cham was accursed and made the slave of his brethren forever, because he once ridiculed his father Noe, who was lying down overcome with wine, canst Thou allow such an inhuman act to go unpunished? No, Thou wilt not do so.

Must suffer fearful punishment from God.

It has hardly ever occurred, my dear brethren, as far as we read in history, that a child who has dared to beat, or to threaten to beat his parents, has not afterwards been visibly punished by God. Passing over many other examples in support of this truth, which time does not allow me to relate, I will mention one that is related by St. Peter Damian: There was once a son who was celebrating his marriage feast, and who, on account of some mistake in preparing the food, forgot himself so far as to strike his mother on the cheek, thinking that she was in fault. But, see, how just are the judgments of God against those who dishonor their parents; immediately his left cheek became affected by a cancer, which caused him such intolerable pain that he ran about bellowing like an ox, until at the request of his mother, he went to the Church of the Holy Martyr Nazarius, where, after doing penance, he obtained a cure. Father Benedict Fernandius relates another example of a son who, growing impatient at the advice and reproofs of his mother, drew his sword and attempted to stab her, and would have done so had not another woman caught hold of him, and, acting under a sudden inspiration from God, said to him: "Hold, wicked man! in a short time you will die a violent death and without confession; and I am sure of that from the divine warnings as well as from human experience." Her prophecy turned out true; for, on the following night, the impious young man, while on the way to commit another crime, was attacked and his mouth was pierced by a sword, while the tongue, with which he had dishonored his mother, was driven down his throat; he died immediately without giving any sign of repentance, and doubtless was buried in hell for all eternity. Let all children who are disrespectful to their parents, take warning by this. Woe to you, who, at the present day, dare to attempt the like! And woe to all those who are in any way forgetful of the respect they owe their parents! Hear the words of the Almighty God: "Cursed be he that honoreth not his father and mother;[1] and all the people shall say, Amen!" Cursed

[1] Maledictus, qui non honorat patrem suum et matrem.—Deut. xxvii. 16.

in temporal things, for he will have no blessing in them! Cursed in his children, for they will treat him as he treated his own parents! Cursed in the years of his life, which the just judgment of God will shorten, so that he will die an untimely death, or, if he lives to be an old man, it will be only, as St. John Chrysostom says, that he may be more miserable and unhappy here; for the man who dishonors his parents, deserves no blessing, but rather a curse from God.

Conclusion and exhortation.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long upon the earth."[1] Keep always before your eyes the example of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who often said to the Jews: "I honor my Father."[2] To this end were directed all His thoughts, words, and actions, that, namely, He and all men might honor His heavenly Father. Often imagine that you see Him in the lowly house at Nazareth. How respectfully He treated His foster-father and His poor Mother, for nearly thirty years, so that he did nothing against their will. "And He was subject to them."[3] Repent of the faults you have hitherto committed in this respect, before the punishment and the curse of God overtake you. Think and say: Henceforth I will atone by a greater and more humble respect for my former irreverence towards my parents. I will honor them as a child ought, in word and work, and with all patience. Reason itself tells me that I ought to do this, gratitude requires it of me, and I am commanded to do it by my heavenly Father, whom I must obey in all things, and whom I hope and desire to see with my parents in my heavenly country, where I will praise and adore Him forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Third Sunday after Easter:

Text.

Quia vado ad Patrem.—John xvi. 17.
"Because I go to the Father."

Christ wished to console His disciples so that they might bear His departure from the world with resignation: "A little while and you shall not see me."[4] And He told them the reason why they should console themselves: "For I go to the Father."[5] As if he wished to say: My dear disciples, where the will of my Father is concerned, you must give way, whether it is pleasing

[1] Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam, ut sis longævus super terram.
[2] Ego honorifico patrem meum.—John viii. 49. [3] Et erat subditus illis.
[4] Modicum et non videbitis me. [5] Quia vado ad Patrem.

to you or not; for I will not strive against it, and you have often heard Me say: "I honor my Father;"[1] I always do what is pleasing to Him; so that, since my Father now expects Me in Heaven, I must leave you, and go away from you. Christian children, you may learn from the example of Jesus Christ, how you are to behave in accordance with your duty to your parents. And how? **Honor thy father, etc.**—*continues as before.*

SIXTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE OBEDIENCE THAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS.

Subject.

How just this obedience is. In what, and how it must be practised. How manifold the faults that are committed against it.—*Preached on the second Sunday after the Epiphany.*

Text.

Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.—John ii. 5.
"Whatever he shall say to you, do ye."

Introduction.

So spoke the Mother of God to the servants at the marriage feast: if you wish to do the thing properly, attend to what my Son will say to you. You cannot make a mistake, if you do what He says. Christian children, it is not necessary for me to make a long introduction now. From these few words you may understand what my subject is: you owe your parents the honor of reverence and filial respect, as you have heard in the last sermon. And now, I say to you, in the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Whatever your father and mother shall say to you and command you, that do ye.[2] And that is the second honor you owe your parents—namely, the honor of obedience.

Plan of Discourse.

How just this is; in what, and how you are bound to obey; how manifold the faults that are committed against this obedience. Such is the subject of the present instruction.

Virgin Mother Mary, as thou hast spoken with such power to

[1] Ego honorifico Patrem meum. [2] Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.

the servants, that they did what thy Son commanded, so also now, touch, with the powerful grace of God, the hearts of children, that they may do with readiness and obedience what their father and mother command them to do. All ye guardian angels of children, help herein. And now I begin.

An ignorant man should not undertake anything without the advice and guidance of others.

He who is ignorant in many things that concern his soul, his body, his welfare and condition in life, and who does not yet know how to manage his own affairs properly, must, according to the laws of prudence and good sense, humbly follow the advice, direction, and guidance of others, and obey them blindly, if he does not wish to make a mistake or commit a fault to his own loss. And this is especially the case when he can have a counsellor and guide in whose acuteness, experience, good-will, love and fidelity he can fully trust, without any fear of being deceived. How much more is not this so when one has a right to command him, and whose commands and advice he is therefore bound to follow? Thus, as St. Paul writes, subjects are bound to obey their superiors, although the latter may be heathens and wicked men. And even if they command something unjust, as long as it is not displeasing to God, they must be obeyed with humility and their will must be fulfilled.

Such are children in their youth.

My dear brethren, children in their young days, what are they? The question answers itself; it explains itself sufficiently: they are children who have not reached the years of maturity. Their reason is undeveloped as yet and it shines only as a small gleam of light would through a slit. Now, what could an unripe reason of this kind undertake? Certainly not such an important and difficult business as the way in which a Christian should live, so as to save his soul. What could such a reason do that has no experience of the past, no power of looking forward to the future? A reason that receives no enlightenment except from its own ignorance; that allows itself to be governed only by countless wicked thoughts and inclinations? A reason that avoids only what it finds to be difficult and disagreeable; that strives for nothing except what is pleasing and agreeable to itself? A reason that believes an imaginary good to be a real one, and that resolves on a mode of action, before it understands what it has to do? Among young people, how much boldness do we not find, how much carelessness, how much imprudence in almost everything? And, if they are not otherwise instructed and directed, they are ready to rush blindly and stupidly into the greatest danger. How much thoughtless self-love do we not find amongst them, as

is shown by the fact that they do not know themselves rightly! How quick they are to speak of what they should keep secret! How eagerly they pursue what they should fly and avoid! How often they boast of their faults, and look upon their own disgrace as an honor! How often, on the other hand, they are ashamed of what is most honorable! How inconstant they are in their actions! They desire one thing now and its opposite the next moment, and they hardly know why! They praise what should be blamed, and reject what sensible people look upon as praiseworthy. If a young man, who is already inclined to evil, is led astray by a companion of his own age, and induced to taste forbidden pleasures, great God, what sins are then committed! What recklessness, what carelessness, what folly, what contempt for all divine and human laws! What insensibility to those eternal truths that are capable of moving the heart of one who thinks of them, of keeping him away from evil, and of making him exercise due restraint over himself? "Oh, youth," says St. Augustine, considering all these things, "oh, youth, thou art the flower of age, but thou art also a most dangerous time for the soul."[1] Thou art called certainly the most pleasant time of life, but if thou art not kept in check, it is much to be feared that thou wilt render the remainder of life most miserable, and wilt make an unhappy eternity in the next life.

Therefore they require guides whom they must obey in all things.

Under such circumstances, and while still in the ignorance and want of thought that characterises their time of life, what would become of children, if they were left to do their own will, and if they were not obliged to follow the advice and instruction of others and to be obedient to them? What would become of them? The same that would become of a ship without a mast, that is driven about by the storm, on the high seas, in the dark night, until at last it is cast on a rock or a sandbank, or is overpowered by the fury of the waves, that sometimes raise it up on high and sometimes sink it down into the depths. So that children stand in need of the advice and guidance of others, whom they are bound to obey in all things with humility and docility; as we see from the mere consideration of the natural qualities of young people.

Parents are the best guides, as they have the most experience.

And what better guides could they find than their own parents? Whose commands, directions, instructions, could they obey with more confidence and security; to whom could they confide their fortunes more fully than to their father and mother?

[1] O juventus, flos ætatis, periculum mentis.

For, in the first place, who has more experience in the things that they command their children to do and to avoid, as well as in those things to which they must exhort them, as their parents, who have already passed through the same years of childhood and youth, and who have now come to a ripe and sensible age, and who, therefore, know, from their own experience, how children must be dealt with, what their dispositions are, what passions and inclinations they are subject to, and who know also, from the way their own parents treated them, what faults may be committed in the rearing, the instruction, and the care of children? They can now remember what happened to themselves, and say: See, my father or mother treated me in such and such a manner, they gave me instructions in a certain way, they punished me when I did this or that; they never allowed me—God forbid that they should—to do certain things, and there were many things that I could not dream of doing. Oh, how good they were to me! I did not understand it then, and was often displeased at what they did to me; now I am filled with gratitude to them for it. In the same way, too, I shall bring up my own children, and look after, exhort, and restrain them. Or, if their parents were careless of them in their young days, they can now say, instructed by their own sad experience: Ah, what a great fault was committed in this particular in my youth! If my father and mother had not given me so much liberty then, if they had been more strict with me, if they had punished me when I did wrong, if they had been more watchful over me, if they had earnestly forbidden me to go near that house or that company, if they had not allowed me to go about where I liked, then I should not have been betrayed into such and such a vice; I should not have learned so early what I had no business to know then. If they had kept me better at work, and inspired me more with the fear and love of God, then I should have spent the beautiful time of my youth in the service of God, to whom alone that time belongs of right. But what is done, is done! I now see where the fault lay, and I shall try to deal better with my own children. See, oh, children, such is the experience that your father and mother have to guide you with; if they only make use of it as they ought. Reason enough, certainly, for you to resolve to give yourselves up to their guidance, and to obey every command and wish of theirs with alacrity.

They receive special light from

Again, is there any one in the world from whom you may with certainty expect such love, affection, and tenderness, as from

your parents, who take the greatest possible interest in your spiritual and temporal welfare; as we see from the great care and trouble that they give themselves every day for your sake, from their affliction and sorrow when anything happens amiss to you, from their joy and pleasure in your good fortune. Nay, even nature itself tells you that, for, if you are in dread of any evil, you fly at once to your father's arms or your mother's lap, with full confidence that under their protection and guardianship you are safe from all harm. It would certainly be cruel and inhuman for a father or mother to forget their own flesh and blood so far, or to hate it to such an extent as to give a child a command, advice, or prohibition that they know to be disadvantageous and hurtful to him! It would be indeed impious for a father or a mother to command or advise a child to do anything which they know would cause him to lose his soul! Therefore you can readily think to yourselves, and hold it for certain too, that whatever your father or mother commands and advises, although it might be injurious to your health now and then, still it can never be really hurtful to you, it must be wholesome and salutary for you. Say to yourselves, whatever my father and mother tell me to do and avoid, that I must observe as well as I can, although I do not now understand it; still I am convinced that they mean well with me, they love me and seek only my welfare. Still another good reason, children, for you to be ruled by your parents, and to obey them readily and humbly in all that is not clearly opposed to the law of God.

God in order to bring up their children well.

The Almighty God, as St. Thomas of Aquinas teaches, has given to every one, according to the position and state of life to which he is called, special graces, lights, and helps, that he may be able to fulfil the duties and obligations of that state properly; and these graces and lights are not given to others who are not in the same position. Now, since the chief obligation of the married state, the principal duty, the most pressing obligation and most important business of parents, is to bring up their children well, and to lead them to Heaven, so also God gives to parents, in preference to others, special lights for their understanding, and special graces and helps to fulfil their duty, in order that they may be able to advise and exhort their children in what is necessary and useful for their eternal salvation. Therefore, pious parents pray to God daily (a custom that should be observed by all parents who desire to do their duty) for light and grace, that they may not do anything

They have the greatest love for their children.

wrong in bringing up their children. There is a fresh reason for you, children, to induce you to obey your parents with the greatest willingness in all they say to you and command you. For, if you think that it is God who is speaking by their mouths, rather than they themselves, that God suggests to them what they are to advise or command you, and that He makes use of them to punish and correct you, you will at once see that whatever they do is only for your good.

God has also made them superiors, and commanded them to be obeyed in all things.

Finally, if there were no other reasons for doing so, Christian children should obey their parents humbly and perfectly, because the Almighty God, whose good-will and pleasure should be our guide in all things, has placed parents over their children as immediate and lawful masters and superiors. He has given them a share of His own superiority and authority, and has even wished them to represent His own person, which must be respected in them, as we have seen in the last sermon. The fact that God wills it ought to be more than sufficient to induce children to obey their parents, for it comes to the same thing to be obstinate and disobedient to one's parents, and to be rebellious towards God. Hear the command that God gives by the mouth of the Apostle St. Paul: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord."[1] That is, as Cornelius à Lapide explains it, "as the Lord,"[2] with the same readiness and perfection with which you should obey your heavenly Father Himself, whose person is represented by your father and mother on earth. Do what they tell you without delay, without contradiction, without exception; nay, even without thinking of not obeying. In what? Hear St. Paul again: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord."[3] In all things, great or small, easy or difficult, agreeable or disagreeable. In all things.[4] Not merely in those which concern the service of God and the salvation of your souls, for disobedience in such matters could hardly be excused from grievous sin, but also in all things which concern your temporal welfare, and which the circumstances of your family require.

As long as nothing displeasing to God is commanded.

However the condition must be fulfilled that they command in the Lord; that is to say, that they do not ask you to do anything against the law of God. St. Jerome says: "Honor your father, as long as he does not separate you from your eternal Father."[5] If your parents tell you to do something sinful, even if it was

[1] Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino.—Ephes. vi. 1. [2] Sicut Domino.
[3] Filii obedite parentibus per omnia, hoc enim placitum est in Domino.—Coloss. iii. 20.
[4] Per omnia. [5] Honora patrem tuum, sed si te a vero Patre non separet.

only to tell a small lie, you could not obey them in the Lord,[1] but against the Lord. If they said to you, for instance: You must steal something here and there; you must manage to bring a way secretly from such and such a house, whatever you can, when opportunity offers; you must treat a certain person with harshness, you must curse and beat him; you must frequent the society of persons of the opposite sex in order to get on quicker in the world; you must dress foppishly, or adorn yourself in the same manner as others, although it is contrary to the Christian law; you must accept a benefice, or be ordained priest, or enter religion, or get married, although you may not be called to do so by God, etc., etc. To follow the will of your parents in such things would not be obedience in the Lord, but rather in the devil; and, therefore, you must immediately refuse obedience. Yet, you should do so with respect, humility, and modesty. You must show them, with friendly words, that when God commands or forbids anything, He must be obeyed before men. How beautifully St. Augustine speaks to parents, for their children, in such circumstances: Father, mother, why do you complain that I will not do or have what you wish? You should know that your child obeys no one in preference to you, except God alone. And he is certainly obliged to be always true to his Creator. Tell him to do something that is not against the will of God, and he will at once obey you as a child should. You cannot expect more from him; otherwise you would compel him to be of the number of those wretches, of whom Christ says: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."[2] In all other things, that are not against the will of God: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord,"[3] as you would obey God Himself, in all humility, love, and willingness. "For this is just."[4]

Isaac an example of filial obedience.

Do you wish to have a pattern and an example of this obedience? You will find a beautiful one in the book of Genesis, in that son whose obedience has gained for him an undying name, and has made him an example for all posterity, in order to show the submission that children owe their parents. That is Isaac, the son of Abraham, the only joy and consolation of his father, the only hope of the family that God had promised to Abraham. Abraham awoke him: Come, my son; come with me; we are going to offer sacrifice to God. At the first word Isaac obeyed, and

[1] In Domino.
[2] Qui amat patrem aut matrem plus quam me, non est me dignus.—Matth. x. 37.
[3] Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino. [4] Hoc enim justum est.

followed without asking where or why. And after travelling three days, when they came to the foot of the mountain, his father placed upon his shoulders the wood for the sacrifice, that he might carry it up the mountain. While they were ascending, Father, asked the son, where is the victim for the sacrifice? Be satisfied, my child, said the father, God will provide one. Having arrived at the top of the mountain, and prepared the altar, he drew his sword. Now, my son, come here, said he; you are the victim that I must now immolate according to the command of God. Isaac, without saying a word, laid himself down on the altar, and stretched forth his neck as readily as if he had nothing to fear, and as if everything that his father did to him must be for his advantage. See, children, what obedience that was, even to death.

Even Jesus Christ Himself.

But this is only a figure and a shadow of the obedience of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God: He says of Himself: "I came down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me."[1] He was the divine Word, like to the Father in all things in His divine nature, so that the Father could not command Him to do anything, nor could He obey, and therefore, to show His obedience, He took human nature, and became less in that nature: He took "the form of a servant. He was obedient to His Father even unto death," and not merely to an ordinary or easy death, but "to the death of the Cross."[2] And not alone to His heavenly Father did He show this obedience; but, what is still more wonderful, this Son of infinite wisdom fulfilled this obedience for thirty years, not otherwise than according to the good will and pleasure of His poor Mother. As we have often said already, "He was subject to them."[3] Christian children! If the example of the Son of God, obedient even to death, cannot move you to be obedient to your parents, oh, then, I may hold my tongue, my words will have no effect!

Many children sin herein, because they do not do as they are told, or do it unwillingly.

Alas! I am afraid that there are many to whom neither the one thing nor the other will do any good! I do not speak of those wicked, obstinate children, who, if their father or mother ask them to do something, make faces at them behind their backs, or even dare to say to them: I will not do it, or, do it yourself, I am not your servant, etc. Impious tongues are those, that deserve to be torn out by the roots! For, in addition to the sin of

[1] Descendi de cœlo, non ut faciam voluntatem meam, sed ejus qui misit me.—John vi. 38.

[2] Formam servi accipiens factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.—Philipp. ii. 7, 8.

[3] Erat subditus illis —Luke ii. 5.

disobedience, there is also the sin of disrespect and rudeness towards their parents. I can hardly imagine respectable children acting in that manner; yet there may be some of them who indeed obey, and do and avoid what they are commanded, but how? That depends on what is commanded. If it is something that they like to do, and are pleased with, then they obey at once and quickly, so that one might think there were not more obedient children in the world than they. But if it is something they do not like, something against their desires and inclinations, oh, what sour faces they make! How they wrinkle their foreheads! How cross they look! How many complaints and excuses they have to make, what opposition they offer! How slow and tedious their obedience; they must be told to do the same thing three, six, ten times, before they stir themselves. And sometimes they cannot be moved until they see the rod in their father's or mother's hand, or even not until they feel it. And even then they do it in a lazy, sleepy, unwilling manner, which shows plainly enough that their obedience is forced, and not voluntary. It is ill hunting with unwilling hounds, and it is a hard thing for parents to see that everything their children do for them is done unwillingly, and only under constraint. I certainly should not care much for a service thus rendered under compulsion! Naughty children! who, like ill-trained horses, that will not go unless they are spurred, refuse obedience unless they are forced to it with the rod! For well-reared children, a mere sign is sufficient, or the bare idea of pleasing their father or mother is inducement enough for them to obey at once.

Those who resist parental correction.

How many children there are, who, if they have to be punished and chastised for a fault, go about the house in a bad humor the whole day, and refuse to give their parents a friendly look; whereas, on the contrary, they ought to be grateful and thankful for the punishment inflicted on them, since it was given them for their good. If there were no looking-glasses in the world, how could one see himself? We might see everything about us, if our eyes are good and if we keep them open, but no one could see his own face. Must I then be angry with the looking-glass because it shows that I have a spot of dirt on my face, and thus warns me that I must wash it off? But the very reason why I use the glass and keep it, is that it may perform such services for me. Children, how many faults and imperfections have you not, that you yourselves cannot see or know? Now your father and mother are, so to say, the looking-glass which shows you those

faults, and they help you to correct them as often as they chastise or punish you. You must therefore bear the punishment with thankful submission, and look upon it as a benefit, if you wish to practise filial obedience as you ought.

Those who, when away from their parents, do not do their will.

How many children there are who are obedient enough in presence of their parents, because they are afraid to be otherwise, but as soon as their parents turn their backs, they give themselves little trouble about their father's or mother's commands. If they are told to go to school, or church, or sermon, or catechism, they go off somewhere else, and tell a lie to excuse themselves afterwards. If they are sent away by their parents to some other town to study, to learn some profession, they spend their parents' hard-earned money in idleness, drinking, and gambling, although that money may be the fruit of rigid economy at home, and was given them in the hope that they would make a good use of it: a hope in which the poor parents are deceived, to their great sorrow.

Those who undertake things without the knowledge and consent of their parents.

How many children there are, who, when they are somewhat grown up, are conceited enough to think that they can manage for themselves, and therefore despise their parents' advice and undertake many things out of their own heads, without asking their parents' opinion. Therefore, it often happens that what they commence in such a silly and imprudent manner, does not turn out well and is lost beyond hope of recovery. The wise Sirach says: "Children, hear the judgment of your father, and so do that you may be saved. For God hath made the father honorable to the children; and seeking the judgment of the mothers, hath confirmed it upon the children."[1] Sons and daughters sin especially in this respect, when they attempt to enter on a state of life without the consent and knowledge of their parents; for instance, if they wish to get married without asking their parents about it. I know well enough that parents cannot restrain the free will of their children in those matters, but must allow them to follow the vocation they have received from God; and therefore, if a child, after praying and considering the matter for a long time, and acting on the advice of his confessor, finds that God has certainly called him to the religious state, but fears that his parents, if they knew of it, would prevent him from obeying the voice of God, he is at perfect liberty to say nothing about it to them and to follow the divine voca-

[1] **Judicium patris audite filii, et sic facite, ut salvi sitis. Deus enim honoravit patrem in filiis, et judicium matris exquirens firmavit in filios.—Eccl. iii. 2, 3.**

tion, whenever he gets a chance of doing so. Otherwise, theologians teach that children can commit a grievous sin by entering on a state of life without the knowledge and consent of their parents; for these latter have reason to feel hurt and offended that their own children did not think it worth while to ask their advice in a matter on which their whole lives depend, and besides, God cannot and will not give His blessing to that state of life which is entered on without the parents' knowledge and consent. "Children, hear the judgment of your father."[1] Children, do nothing without the advice of your parents. Filial obedience and submission require this.

Those who, in spite of the warnings of their parents, lead a bad and wicked life.

Finally, the worst sins of all are committed against obedience by those wicked children who, in spite of the warnings and exhortations of their good parents, neglect the divine service, visit houses of ill-fame, frequent bad company, or otherwise secretly lead unchristian and sinful lives. It is a twofold sin that they commit: one against the law of God, the other, and in a serious matter too, against the obedience they owe their parents. And yet, who is there who thinks anything of this obedience? I am now and then disobedient to my parents. That is almost all that they think it necessary to say in confession. They never dream of saying how and in what they were disobedient, as if that were of no account. And what becomes of true sorrow and firm resolution of amendment under such circumstances? They remain until the next opportunity of disobedience offers itself. How? Naughty children! do you then think nothing of disobeying your parents? Yet the servants in your house are bound to obey under pain of sin, although they work for their daily bread or for small wages. How much more, then, is not a child bound to obey, who receives his very existence, under God, from his parents?

The Old Law had severe punishment for disobedient children.

Is it nothing to disobey one's parents, although that disobedience is strictly forbidden by God, and has always been severely punished? Hear what is said in the Old Testament, and learn to be afraid of disobedience: "If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience, they shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them: 'This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions.'"[2] And what was

[1] Judicium patris audite filii!

[2] Si genuerit homo filium contumacem et protervum, qui non audierit patris et matris imperium, et coërcitus obedire contempserit; apprehendent eum et ducent ad seniores civitatis, et ad portam judicii, dicentque ad eos: Filius noster iste protervus et contumax est: monita nostra audire contemnit.—Deut. xxi. 18, 19, 20.

to be done with him? Hear the judgment: "The people of the city shall stone him, and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it, may be afraid."[1] Is it nothing, then, to be disobedient to one's parents? Have you never heard what happened to Absalom, when he rebelled against his father David, how he hung on an oak tree and was pierced with three lances, and was lost forever, as a terrible proof that they are not worthy to be on the earth, who will not submit to the authors of their being? Or of what befell Esau, when he took a wife without the knowledge and consent of his parents? He became the unhappy father of a people that are accursed by God for all time. Or what happened to the prodigal son in the Gospel, when he went to a foreign country against his father's will, and led an abandoned life? He sunk to such poverty that he was glad to eat of the husks that were given to swine, in order to appease his hunger. Oh, where could stones enough be found nowadays, if all obstinate and disobedient children were to be stoned to death? Where find oak trees enough to hang them on? Where herds of swine enough, among which to throw them? Yet, disobedient and wicked children, you may be certain that you will not escape punishment; although such a severe judgment will not be pronounced against you now, by your superiors, as would have been formerly, yet the all-wise providence of God will know how to punish you severely enough at the proper time.

It is also the case in our days.

Go through any of our hospitals and jails, and you will sometimes find in them children of rich and respectable parents, who now lead a miserable life, full of shame and disgrace, like slaves. Look at the soldiers in war-time, and especially those who complain most of the heat and cold, of hunger and thirst, to which they are not accustomed, and who undergo severe discipline besides. Most of them will acknowledge that the origin of their misery was that they did not wish to obey and listen to their parents in their youth, that they wished to be free and to do their own will. Visit the place of execution, and see those who, as robbers, murderers, or thieves, are hanging on the gallows or lying in prison; the most of them, as they generally acknowledge before death, would not have come to such an extremity, if they had paid more attention in their youth to the advice, exhortations, and commands of their parents. So that there is more than one prodigal son who must suffer hunger and want, more

[1] Lapidibus eum obruet populus civitatis, et morietur, ut auferatis malum de medio vestri et universus Israël audiens pertimescat.—Deut. xxi. 21.

than one Absalom who must end his life by hanging. But why should we go so far for examples? Visit any private house. The unfortunate families, in which there is nothing but fighting and quarrelling and disunion, are, generally speaking, composed of those who either entered on the married state without the knowledge and consent of their parents, or who were formerly disobedient and obstinate children. So that there is more than one Esau who, by despising his parents, brings down the curse of God on himself and his posterity. And all these punishments are perfectly just, oh, most just God! With them Thou pursuest disobedient children even in this life, according to Thy threats! And what will it be hereafter, when fathers and mothers themselves shall complain of and condemn their disobedient children? See, they will say, when God asks the souls of their children from them, we are not to blame because our son or daughter has lived in sin, and been lost forever. We have tried to do well by our children. We have often warned, punished, and chastised them. Daily have we tried to exhort them to good and to keep them from evil. But this our son, our daughter, has been self-willed and obstinate. Our children have neglected our warning,[1] they would not listen to us, or obey us; they abandoned themselves to vice against our express command, and filled us with sorrow and trouble. It is for thee, oh, just Judge, to pronounce sentence! And how much more terrible that sentence will be, than was the sentence in former times among the Jews! There will be no stoning to death, but an eternal fire, to which those disobedient children, who die impenitent, will be condemned.

Conclusion, and exhortation to filial obedience.

I warn you again in the words of the Apostle: Christian children! obey your parents in all things in the Lord,[2] and as you would obey the Lord. Do not, by disobedience, make the duty of your fathers and mothers still more difficult than it is, nor their obligation to bring you up well and to lead you to Heaven, more burdensome than it is already. Let it never be necessary for them to tell you twice to do a thing. Let a single sign, or the good will and pleasure of your parents suffice, as it ought with well-reared children, for you to do and to avoid all that they require of you. Obey with the same quickness and readiness with which the echo answers the voice. If you call out loud in a forest, or on a mountain, the echo answers immediately, as if to say, Here I am! So also, you, children, obey at once and with-

[1] Filius noster iste protervus et contumex est, monita nostra audire contemnit.

[2] Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino!

out delay, the first word of your father and mother, when they give you a command. The echo answers everything you call out to it. If I cry out, *Alleluia*, the echo repeats, *Alleluia;* if I say, *Miserere*, the echo answers in the same tone. Of the same pattern should your obedience be, whatever may be the command given you, whether it is pleasing to your senses, or not. Whether it is like the joyful *alleluia*, or the doleful *miserere*, you must obey with equal readiness and willingness in either case. It makes no difference to the echo whether the man who calls out be rich or poor, young or old, weak or healthy, ignorant or learned, pious or wicked; it answers at once without making any distinction. It is not on account of the riches, learning, skill, goodness, mildness, or piety of your parents, that you, oh, children, must obey them; nor is their old age, feebleness, ignorance, peevishness, obstinacy, or wickedness a reason for your being less obedient to them. It should suffice to think: it is my father or mother that commands me. We cannot go wrong if we obey them in all lawful things. Whenever your father tells you to do anything, think to yourself that Jesus Christ is standing there and speaking to you in the words of my text: "Whatever he shall say to you, do it;"[1] for that is my will and pleasure. Whenever your mother gives you a command, think that Mary the Mother of God is standing at her side, and saying the same words to you. "Whatever she says to you, do it," for such is my wish and desire. And as you would not refuse anything that Jesus Christ, or His holy Mother, would ask from you, but do it at once, as perfectly as possible, even in the same way, you must obey your father and mother, who represent them, so that you may gain the great reward of obedience, which is a long, happy, and blessed life here on earth, and eternal life in Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Fourth Sunday after Easter:

Text.

Vado ad eum qui misit me.—John xvi. 5.
"I go to Him who sent Me."

My father has sent Me on earth, and I came to spend thirty-three years on earth in poverty, sorrow, and suffering, according to His holy will; now He expects Me in His kingdom, and behold, I go there,[2] because He desires Me to do so. Thus spoke and acted Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Christian children, I need not make a long introduction, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite. [2] Vado ad eum.

SEVENTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE LOVE THAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS.

Subject.

1st. Children must love their parents truly and constantly. 2d. Many sin grievously against this obligation.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Dico huic, Vade, et vadit ; et alii, Veni, et venit ; et servo meo, Fac hoc, et facit.—Matth. viii. 9.

"And I say to this, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it."

Introduction.

All children should be to their fathers and mothers as this servant was to his master, and then so many parents would not have so much to suffer from the disobedience and obstinacy of their children, as we have seen in the last sermon. There is still another and a very serious obligation incumbent on children, which is the foundation of the other two, but which, alas! is least of all considered and that is, that they should show their parents the honor of filial love. This will be the matter of to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Children must love their parents truly and constantly. Such will be the subject of the first part. Many children sin grievously against this obligation. The second part. The conclusion will be a resolution of amending all past faults in this respect.

And mayest Thou, oh, heavenly Father, grant us to fulfil it by Thy grace, through the merits of the Mother of Thy Son, and the intercession of the holy guardian angels.

We are bound to love our neighbors, and even our enemies: how much more our benefactors.

Children are bound to love their parents! That is a strange subject, indeed! What is the meaning of bringing that forward? Who ever dreamed of doubting it? Why, we are bound by the law of nature to love our friends and relatives. The law of honor teaches us to love our benefactors ; while the law of God tells us to love our neighbor, even if he be unknown and a stranger to us,

even if he be a Turk or a heathen; nay, more, the law of Jesus Christ commands us to love even the worst enemies who have injured us. And do I now exhort and persuade children to love their fathers and mothers! If man had lost the light of reason altogether; if he had only as much instinct left as God has given even to the most savage beast, he must still know that he ought to love his father and mother more than any one else in the world. Yes, my dear, Christian brethren, if we all were as we ought to be, and acted according to reason and knowledge, then I would confess that I have made a mistake to treat of such a subject, since it is one which stands in need of no preaching or exhortation, one which the very law of nature and humanity suggests to us. But, alas, for the times in which we live! There are, in our days, children so undutiful as to act against the law of nature and reason in this respect; so that it becomes necessary to heap together proofs to show how just it is for children to love their parents, to preach often against the injustice of refusing them that love, and excite children to the fulfilment of this obligation by terrifying them with threats of punishment, and by encouraging them with hopes of great reward.

How much more our parents, since they are nearest to us, and are our greatest benefactors.

Therefore, children, I now ask you, if you must love your neighbor as yourselves, who are nearer to you than father and mother? If you must love your friends and relatives, who are more closely connected with you than those from whom you have received your flesh and blood, and whose blood still runs in your veins? If you are bound to love your benefactors, not to speak of those who injure you, where will you find a greater benefactor on earth than father or mother? You are cold and naked (so let each one imagine to himself), you are poor, hungry, thirsty, needy, and do not know where to turn. Some one takes pity on you and receives you into his house, clothes you from head to foot, provides you with money, keeps you for many years, gives you food and drink as good as he has himself, helps you in all dangers with the greatest care and readiness, waits on you day and night, and finally places you in a position suited to your birth, although he must rob himself in order to do so. What, I ask you, would such a benefactor deserve from you? Should not the bare recollection of him fill your heart with love for him? Would it be right for you, I will not say to hate or annoy him, but even to give him a cross look? Reason itself tells you that that would be wrong, for it would be intolerable

ingratitude. But all these benefits, and countless others, you have received from your parents.

For what have not father and mother done through love for their children

On your account your mother has had much discomfort, sickness, difficulty, and pain before you were born, in your birth, and after it. For some years she had to carry you about in her arms, until she was tired. For your sake she had to remain awake hours and hours during the night, in order to help you when you cried. For your sake she had often to take what she would much rather have done without, and to deny herself what she would willingly have eaten or drunk, so that you might suffer no harm while she was nursing you. On your account was she often anxious and uneasy, through fear of some accident happening you. On your account she was often disturbed and tormented, and shed bitter tears if any misfortune befell you, and she suffered, too, if anything disagreeable happened to you. For you has your father, as well as your mother, toiled and labored for so many years, in order to keep you respectably and to provide you with food and clothing. For you they have often taken the bit out of their own mouths and have deprived themselves of many conveniences and luxuries, and, perhaps, too, have lived sparingly and parsimoniously, in order that they might leave you something to set you up in life. For you have they made so many wearisome journeys to and fro. For you have their minds been filled with anxiety and apprehension lest any evil should befall your soul or your body. For you have they spent the hard-earned money, that they put together with so much trouble, that you might be educated, instructed, and provided for. All your troubles, illnesses, and difficulties have afflicted the hearts of your father and mother. How patiently, how courageously Job bore his great misfortunes, the loss of all his land, the theft of his cattle, the plundering of all his goods; but when word was brought to him that his children, too, were slain, his father's heart could not conceal its sorrow any longer. The holy Scripture says: "Then Job rose up and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped!"[1] By which he shows us that there is nothing so capable of disturbing the heart of a father as the misfortune of his children. The mother, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, came weeping to Christ, crying: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David."[2] And why? What was the matter with her? "My daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."[3]

[1] Surrexit, et scidit vestimenta sua, et tonso capite corruens in terram, etc.—Job i. 20.
[2] Miserere mei Domine. [3] Filia mea male a dæmonio vexatur.—Matth. xv. 22.

It is your daughter, then, who is troubled! Why did you not say: Have mercy on my daughter, oh, Son of David? If there is nothing the matter with yourself, why do you cry out: Have mercy on me? The glossary answers: "She said, Have mercy on me, because the suffering of the daughter is also the suffering of the mother."[1] The children's sorrow is their parents' sorrow too. Such was the case, too, oh, child, with your father and mother, whenever the least mishap occurred to you. In a word, that you now exist, that you are alive, that you have not broken your leg, or your arm, or your neck, when you were a child, that you are now grown up, that you have some property, and a position in life, all these things you owe, under God, to no one but your father and mother. And what makes the benefit greater still, they did all this for you, for no other motive than the purest, most disinterested, most heartfelt, and tenderest love and affection for you.

Therefore they are worthy of special love.

Now, if you are an honorable man, I will leave it to yourself to say what they deserve, what they have earned from you, who have done all this for you. Are they worthy of comfort or sorrow, of help or neglect, of honor or contempt, of gratitude or ingratitude, of love or hatred? What do they deserve? The old Tobias will tell me, if no one else does: "Thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life."[2] Such was the advice he gave his son when he thought himself at the point of death. Why? "For thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee?"[3] What do parents deserve? The wise Ecclesiasticus tells us: "Honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother: remember that thou hadst not been born but through them: and make a return to them as they have done for thee."[4] What do they deserve? Ask St. Ambrose, who speaks thus to a certain son, who, indeed, maintained his mother, but was not so friendly and loving towards her as he ought to have been: "The love due to parents should not be injured even by a cross look."[5] "Although you maintain your mother,"[6] and perform every service for her, do her all the good you can, "yet you have not repaid all that she has done for you." You have not yet given back the pain she suffered on your account, nor the services that

[1] Dicit, miserere mei, quia dolor filiæ dolor est matris.

[2] Honorem habebis matri tuæ, omnibus diebus vitæ ejus.—Tob. iv. 3.

[3] Memor enim esse debes, quæ et quanta pericula passa sit pro te.—Ibid. 4.

[4] Honora patrem tuum, et genitus matris tuæ ne obliviscaris: memento quoniam, nisi per illos, natus non fuisses, et retribue illis, quomodo et illi tibi.—Eccl. vii. 29, 30.

[5] Ne vultu quidem lædanda est pietas parentum.—Ibid. 4.

[6] Etsi paveris matrem, adhuc non reddidisti dolores, etc.

she performed for you from your childhood; nor have you repaid her for the milk with which she suckled you, for the hunger and thirst she endured for you, for the restless nights and troubled days she passed on your account; you have not yet wiped away the tears she shed for you, etc.; and so St. Ambrose goes on. What do parents deserve from their children? Even blind heathens tell us: "We can never show sufficient love and gratitude to God and to our parents;" [1] these are the words of the philosopher Aristotle. All that we have and are worth belongs to them of whom we are born, and who brought us up. Reason alone taught even heathens that children owe all love and service to their parents; nay, that they cannot even love and serve them enough. The reason of this is evident: since the life that we receive from them is the foundation of all other goods, it is a benefit greater than any other. Therefore, if, by a rare chance, a child were in a position to save his father's or mother's life by giving up his own, he would not do more for them than they have done for him, nor give them more than he owes them. From which we may conclude, that the law commanding us to love our parents more than any one else in the world, no matter how near he may be to us, is a privileged law, and admits of no exception. I love my friend, and friendship requires of me to show this love for him, but only as long as he is true to me; if I see and am convinced that he is false and deceitful to me, that he acts repeatedly against my interests, then it is in my power to show him that, love or not, just as I like, I am not obliged to have more love for him than I must have for all, even if they are strangers and unknown to me; all special confidences, visiting, and affectionate intercourse may cease at once. But it is not so with the law commanding me to love my parents: if they act against my interests even repeatedly, if they occasion me annoyance, trouble, torment, and misery, still I am not allowed to show them less honor and love, nor to go against their interests, nor to occasion them annoyance; unless, indeed, they try to prevent and hinder me from doing the holy will of God.

Of what kind that love must be.

But, alas! What perversity even among Christian children! They all declare they love their parents, but in many cases their love consists in mere talk; their deeds are quite contrary to their words. It should be a true love, which, as the Apostle St. John writes, proves itself by works: a love which affects, not merely the heart, but the whole man, so that he endeavors to be the

[1] Deo et parentibus nunquam satis rependi potest.

comfort and joy of his parents in every possible way. It must be a constant love, that lasts beyond the years of childhood, and is not changed by difficulties, but perseveres even unto death. It must be an active, beneficent love, by which one is always ready to assist one's parents with advice and work, with help and service, and to take more care of them in their illness or in old age than of one's own children, and to maintain them, if they are poor, even by taking the bread out of one's own mouth. But, I repeat, what perversity! How rare this constant love is! Would to God that there were not many children, who, in place of gratitude, show their parents only the greatest unthankfulness, and in place of loving, rather hate and occasion them annoyance. Yet, alas, that is the case only too often; as you will see in the

Second Part.

Many children do the opposite—shown by an example.

Diodorus Siculus tells a story of a father who had three putative sons, and who knew that only one of them was really his son; he left, in his will, all his property to him who should be afterwards acknowledged to be his lawful son. The three young men presented themselves before the judge, after the father's death. Each one said that he was the lawful heir, and claimed the inheritance. The judge, not knowing how to settle the doubt, at length hit upon a plan, which all approved of. He caused the father's dead body to be bound fast to a tree, as a mark for the sons to shoot their arrows at; he who hit the heart, or whose arrow went nearest to the heart, was to be the heir. The first son bent his bow and shot off his arrow, the second did the same, but neither of them hit the body near the heart. The third son, who had now the best chance, when he was told that it was his turn to shoot, grew pale and began to tremble all over, and let his bow and arrow fall from his hand. Ah, he cried, how can I aim at my father's heart, and pierce that body which gave me my life, and which I loved, therefore, more than my own heart? It is impossible for me to do it; I do not want the inheritance; I would rather be a beggar. I cannot and will not do it! On hearing these words, all present acknowledged him to be the lawful son, and the inheritance was given to him. My dear brethren, this story may be true or false; it makes no matter in any case; would to God that in our days every one bore such a filial love to his parents as the son in the story did, even to his dead father! But could a child be found so hard-hearted, ungrateful, and cruel as to dare to pierce the heart of his father or

mother? This seems to me so strange and unusual, that if I had only arrived in the world to-day and were told of such wickedness, I could not believe it, but should look upon it as a falsehood. And yet, oh, just Heaven, if the proofs, that really exist, were brought forward to support it, I should be forced, against my will, to acknowledge the truth of it.

Children who sadden their parents' hearts by their wickedness, act in this way.

There is no doubt that there are such wicked, godless children, who are not afraid of wounding most cruelly, and piercing the living hearts of their father or mother, as if it were a mark for them to aim at, not indeed with swords or arrows, but by disobedience, and by scandalous and unchristian lives, which wound far deeper than arrows. How many wound their parents' hearts by irreverence, since they treat their father and mother with such little respect, and so contemptuously? How many wound and pierce their parents' hearts by disobedience and obstinacy, since they will not do as they are told, as we have seen in a former sermon? How many (to keep to our present subject) wound and pierce their parents' hearts by a want of filial love! for there are some children who, though they do not hate their parents, yet never show outwardly the love and affection they should have for them, because they are no longer in need of their parents' care. There are some, too, who always look crossly at their parents, hardly ever have a friendly word for them, and always meet them in a sulky manner, so that it is hard to say whether it is a son or a daughter, or a mere stranger that accosts them. That such conduct causes much secret grief to parents, we can easily imagine. Other children, who have still something to expect from their parents, are like those of whom St. Peter Chrysologus speaks: "They are so eager to succeed to the inheritance, that the life of their father or mother is a torment to them;"[1] they would rather see their parents carried out of the house dead, than see them coming into it alive and well. They act like birds of prey, that perch on a tree until they see some wild beast hunted down, when they swoop down upon the weak and wounded, or dead animal. Sometimes, even, they steal away their parents' property, while the latter are still alive, under the pretence of doing them a service thereby. A fine love, surely, which regards not the person, but the property, and which is so greedy of gain that it is impatient for the parents' death!

Those who refuse to help and

There are other children still worse, who refuse to help their parents in old age or feebleness; or who do not give them

[1] Sic cupiditate hæredi'atis æstuat, ut patris vita torqueatur.

assist them as they ought.

proper food and nourishment, or give it them only rarely, and do not help them as they ought, in poverty; although in such circumstances father and mother are most in want of help and comfort from their children, and children are bound then, more than ever, to show their love and gratitude to their parents when the latter are in want. For they have received nothing but benefits from their parents in the past, and the time of old age, or poverty, is almost the only one in which the latter expect their children to do something for them in return. This is the time in which a loving child should be to his parents, as the holy Scripture says of the younger Tobias, a light to their eyes, a staff and support of their weakness, a consolation in the decline of their days. But, alas, this is the very time in which most children forget their filial affection. The aged patriarch Jacob, when his sons wished to bring Benjamin to Egypt, began to weep and lament bitterly, saying: "You have made me to be without children: Joseph is not living, Simeon is kept in bonds, and Benjamin you will take away; all these evils are fallen upon me."[1] What? Had he not ten sons besides Joseph and Benjamin? Yes, but he had not the consolation in them that he had in the other two, and therefore it seemed to him that he had lost all his children. Many aged or impoverished parents may make the very same complaint to-day—I have been robbed of all my children! I have many sons and daughters alive, but I am here alone as if I had not one; they have abandoned me and they give me neither help nor comfort.

What an injustice!

Oh, father, oh, mother, deserving of pity! By toiling and laboring for so many years, you have kept two, three, four, five, six children, you have brought them up respectably and given them a position in life; and now—shame! that I should have to say it—three, four, or six children cannot manage to keep their old father, or their poor mother, respectably, for a short time! One throws the responsibility on the other. What is it to me? they say. I am not bound to do more than my brothers and sisters. Hardly has the son cast his eye on and given his heart to a stranger, hardly has the daughter given her affections to her future husband, when the father and mother are almost forgotten. And after the marriage of the children, their filial love often disappears altogether. They say: I must look after myself and my own family; my wife and children have the first claim on me; I have enough

[1] Absque liberis me esse fecistis. Joseph non est super, Simeon tenetur in vinculis, et Benjamin aufertis; in me hæc omnia mala ceciderunt. —Gen. xlii. 36.

to do to keep them ; I cannot provide for so many. And if they give anything to their parents, they look upon it as an alms, and expect that God will look upon it in the same light. Meanwhile, what a sad thing it is to see an aged father, or a poor mother, after having given themselves all sorts of trouble, spent their substance, and stripped themselves, so to speak, in order to help their children and give them a position in the world, what a sad thing to see these parents, now that their children are well off, suffering from poverty, so that they must beg a piece of bread, for God's sake, and as an alms, from those to whom they gave all they had ! Oh, earth, the common mother of all, how canst thou give bread to such heartless children ! For they do not give bread, or not enough of it, at least, to those who gave them birth, who fed and brought them up. Oh, ye heavens, how can you cause the fruits of the earth to grow for those who do not maintain, as they ought, the parents who gave them being !

An ingratitude of which heathens, nay, even wild beasts, are ashamed.

Oh, ingratitude of which heathens and even wild beasts are ashamed ! Æneas was a heathen who, after the burning of Troy, left all his money and property as a prey to the flames, that he might all the better be able to carry his idols and his aged father, whom he took upon his back to a place of safety outside the town. That daughter, too, who fed her father with her own milk, when he was condemned to die of hunger in prison, was a heathen. The Chinese in the East are heathens, and yet, if their parents get sick, the children stand around the bed and tear the flesh off their arms, cook it, and give it to their sick father or mother ; thereby showing that they are willing to give up, not merely their money and property, but their flesh and blood, and even their lives, in order to preserve their parents in health and strength. I am ashamed to think that I must bring forward such examples of filial love, to make Christian children ashamed of their ingratitude. SS. Ambrose and Basil remind such thankless children of the conduct even of dumb animals, and especially of storks, crows, and ravens, who, when their parent birds are too old to fly, cover them with their wings, take them on their backs from place to place, and feed them carefully with the food they have collected. Even fierce lions share their prey with the old ones, when the latter are no longer capable of providing for themselves. So that children who refuse to serve or help their aged or poor parents, and who do not give them proper food, or care for them properly, are more ungrateful than beasts of prey and carrion birds.

With regard to support, parents must be preferred before one's own wife and children.

You offer, as I have mentioned already, the heartless excuse: I have my own wife and children to keep: I must first provide for myself and my family; they have the first claim. But your distinction does not avail you! "In the first place," says St. Ambrose, and St. Thomas of Aquin agrees with him, "we must love God, then our parents, and then our children."[1] God says: "Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;"[2] but that text must be understood, according to the explanation of St. Thomas, to speak only of co-habitation: in which certainly the wife has a prior claim to the parents; but not of support and maintenance, for in that the parents have the first claim when they are in want. Nay, those who are learned in the Holy Scriptures say with Abulensis, that in equal necessity I am more bound to support my father and mother, than I am to support myself; so that, if I had but one loaf of bread, it would not do merely to give half of it to my father or mother, when they are in want; I must even deprive myself of the last crumb, in order to preserve, as long as possible, the lives of those from whom I have received my life. Even the Almighty God Himself wills that, in certain circumstances, the love of parents be perferred to His; for instance, if one has made a vow to serve God in a religious order, and his father or mother fall into poverty, so that his help is required to support them, he cannot fulfil his vow, in accordance with the divine law, as long as his parents are in need of him.

What a sin for children to forget their deceased parents!

Finally, what shall I say of those ungrateful children who act like the two sons that shot their arrows at their dead father's body; that is to say, who not only fail in their duty of loving their parents during life, but neglect them also after their death? Who, after having got their share of the inheritance, never think of the souls of their deceased parents, and are so avaricious that they hardly ever get a Mass said for their comfort and speedy release, but look upon it as a matter of indifference whether their parents are in purgatory or not? Who do not give to the poor, or for pious uses what their parents left by will for those purposes? Sometimes it happens that a father or mother leaves thousands to be divided amongst their children, and a few hundreds, perhaps, for a hospital or a church for the good of their own souls, and their children contest the latter part of the will, refuse to fulfil it, and disobey the last dying injunctions of their father or

[1] Primo loco diligendus est Deus, secundo parentes, inde filii.

[2] Relinquet homo patrem suum et matrem, et adhærebit uxori suæ.—Gen. ii. 24.

mother through avarice. So little do they think of the souls of their parents, as long as they can have their property.

Further explanation of the enormity of all sins whatever against filial love.

O wicked children, who in this, or in any other way whatsoever, wound the hearts of your parents by a want of affection for them! If it is ingratitude to make no return for a benefit received, what an enormity it is to forget it altogether and to act as if it had not been conferred at all! How intolerable is your conduct, then, who repay such great benefits by such black ingratitude! Who embitter and trouble the lives of those to whom you owe your own lives in so many ways! Have your good parents done and suffered so much for you, only that you might cause them still greater pain and suffering? Have they often taken the bread out of their own mouths for your sake, only that you might now refuse them the bread they require from you? Have they brought you up with such care that they might now be abandoned by you in their helplessness? Have they shed so many tears for you, for fear of losing you and with the hope and consolation of having you as a support and staff in their old age, on which they might depend with certainty, and do you now treat them thus? Alas, what sort of a staff are you for them? You are rather a rod to punish them, a nail in their coffins! Have they given you life, that they might find in you a murderer who shortens or takes away their lives from them? What a fearful crime it is to kill one's father or mother! Even barbarians abhor it! Yet, wicked children, although they do not commit this crime with violence, yet they commit it by their ingratitude, by their bad behaviour, by their disobedience, contempt, and want of filial love, for by all these things they make their parents suffer a bitter martyrdom. They might well say, as Rebecca said when she thought she was about to die in childbirth: "If it were to be so with me, what need was there to conceive?"[1] Since my children cause me so much suffering, would it not have been better not to have brought them into the world? O God of justice, where are Thy thunderbolts? Where is the terrible curse Thou hast long ago spoken against those who cause sorow to their parents? Let it resound once more in the ears of all, so as to induce them to amend their lives: How dishonored is the child who abandons his father; and cursed by God is he who provokes his mother.[2]

[1] Si sic mihi futurum erat, quid necesse fuit, concipere? Gen. xxv. 22.

[2] Quam malæ famæ est, qui derelinquit patrem; et est maledictus a Deo, qui exasperat matrem. —Eccl. iii. 18.

And is it not punishment enough, O my God, to be cursed by Thee ?

Conclusion and exhortation to children.

Christian children, is it not true that we do not wish to expose ourselves to such a punishment; and that, therefore, we shall always be true to the oft-quoted exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians: "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth."[1] Honor them with the honor of a willing obedience which is due to them, and with the honor of a true, constant, and filial love and helpfulness, which is also due to them, "that it may be well with thee."[2] What is the meaning, asks St. Augustine, of the words: "That thou mayest be long-lived upon earth" ?[3] Oh, he says, that reward was promised to the Jews in the Old Law, it is too small for a Christian. "See thou hast done thy duty,"[4] he says to a good child who loves his parents as he ought; "come here now and receive thy reward."[4] "What reward?"[5] "A resurrection to eternal life."[6] Happy children! What greater honor could you have, before God and man, than to be able to say with truth: From my earliest years I have honored my father and mother, I have never done anything in the least disrespectful to them, I never did anything against their will, I have never caused them sorrow of heart either by word or deed, I never omitted doing what I thought would please them! Ah, would that I too could say that ! O my God, whom I have additional reason for choosing as my Father, since the death of my parents, I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having ever failed in my duty as a child ! And you, my parents, pardon me if I have caused you sorrow by my disobedience and bad behaviour, and if I am, perchance, the cause of your now having to suffer in purgatory! I will atone for it by earnest prayer. And do Thou, O God, forgive this sin to me and to all those whose parents are still alive! They all promise, without exception, to fulfil their duty more faithfully in future, and to be a comfort to their parents till death, by being truly obedient, respectful, and loving towards them. Do Thou help all children to do this by Thy powerful grace, so that they may see Thee, their heavenly Father, along with their parents, in eternal joys. Amen.

[1] Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam (quod est mandatum primum in promissione) ut bene sit tibi et sis longævus super terram.—Ephes. vi. 2, 3.
[2] Ut bene sit tibi. [3] Ut sis longævus super terram.
[4] Ecce debitum reddidisti, accipe præmium.
[5] Quod præmium ? [6] Resurrectio sine morte.

Another Introduction for the Fourth Sunday after Easter:

Text.

Ipse enim Pater amat vos.—John xvi. 27.
"For the Father Himself loveth you."

What Jesus Christ says to His Apostles of His heavenly Father, I say to all of you to-day, Christian children, of your parents Your father and your mother love you.[1] Certainly reason enough for you to love them in return. And this is the last and principal duty you have to perform towards your parents, namely to honor them by filial love. It will form the subject of to-day's sermon. Children, then, are bound, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Ipse pater amat vos.

ON THE

DUTIES OF THE YOUNG, AND OF ALL MEN TOWARDS THEMSELVES.

EIGHTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE CARE OF ONE'S PRECIOUS SOUL.

Subject.

1st. The most costly image is the human soul.—2d. As costly as it is, it is little cared for by us.—*Preached on the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Cujus est imago hæc?—Matth. xxii. 20.
"Whose image is this?"

Introduction.

As Cælius testifies, it was formerly the custom among heathens to brand their seals or escutcheons on the foreheads of their slaves, so that the latter might remain constantly in the service of their masters, and, in case they ran away, that it might be easily known to what master they belonged. My dear brethren, man is created to serve his God and his Lord; that is the only reason why we are all upon this earth. In order to keep man in His service, God has impressed His own image on the rational soul of man. What image is that?[1] we might often ask ourselves. To whom does this image belong? What sort of an image is it, the like of which is not to be found in any other creature on earth for costliness? And yet, how cheaply we men hold that image! We must rejoice at the first proposition, and grieve at the second. I shall explain both to-day.

Plan of Discourse.

The human soul is a most costly image. Such will be the matter of the first part. As costly as it is, it is little cared for by us.

[1] Cujus est imago hæc?

Such will be the second part. Christians! look after your souls carefully! Such will be the conclusion.

Give us your powerful grace to do this, O Saviour of our souls. We ask it of you by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our angels guardian.

What it is that makes an image costly.

The costliness and excellence of an image must be judged, by one who is not a connoisseur in art, from the excellence of the master who has made it, from the skilful way in which it is completed, or from the price and value set upon it by those who understand the art. Thus, if I say, for instance, this picture is an original by Rubens, that famous painter, I need not say any more, especially to one who is a judge of painting, for he would immediately have a high idea of the value of this picture. And if I said, moreover, this is the most excellent work of that painter, in which, especially, he wished to show his skill; and if I added, that he would not part with this picture during his life-time for any money, every one who hears and believes these words, would certainly say, even without seeing the picture at all: Oh, it must be certainly something very valuable and precious!

All these the human soul has; it is the master-piece of God.

Oh, man! no matter how poor and lowly you may be before the world, what a beautiful, rare, and precious image you carry about with you! Must I tell you how valuable your soul is? Then I need say nothing of the exceeding beauty which it received from its Creator. I need not tell you that it is one, spiritual and immortal, eternal in its being; that it is created for no other end and object than to possess its Creator forever in eternal joys; that it is the dwelling-place, the daughter, the spouse of the Most High; that the life, health, beauty, sensibility, and movements of your body come from it, and are kept up by it. Think only of the skilful Master who has made this image; of the labor and care He bestowed on it; of the model after which He made it; of the price and value He sets upon it, and from that you must see how precious your soul is. The Maker of this image is the All-wise and All-powerful God Himself, from whose hand nothing bad can come; and the Almighty God alone, for I know well that all things come from God, as their first cause; and the human soul too, but in a special manner. He produced the first herbs, plants, and trees from the earth, the first fishes and fowls from the waters and the first beasts from the earth. He formed, too, the first human body from the slime of the earth, and no other body has been formed in that manner since, for each living thing re-

ceived strength and fruitfulness from nature to propagate itself. But it is quite different with the souls of men: in creating them God did not wish to make use of any pre-existing material. Through all time, as well as in the beginning, He wished to be the sole and immediate cause of their existence. God is the Father of every soul, and God alone, without the co-operation of any creature.

He has created it with the greatest care, and according to His own image.

If we consider the care and labor with which the soul was created, we must acknowledge that no other creature was the object of such solicitude; for although the Almighty God finished the creation of the world in five successive days, and brought so many beautiful things into being, yet, all this cost Him nothing more than the words: Let it be made. Let there be light, and there was light;[1] and so on for everything in the heavens and on the earth. He spoke and it was done.[2] But when He created man, a rational being, the principal part of whom is the soul, the Three Divine Persons assembled in council, to deliberate on that great work. The Eternal Father spoke with His Son, and the Son with the Holy Ghost, and they said together: "Let us make;"[3] after having made so many creatures, as signs of our almighty power, let us finish the work by creating a being who will surpass them all by being the visible and living copy of our divine glory on earth: "Let us make man to our image and likeness."[4] Meditating on this likeness, St. Ambrose calls out to me and to all men: "Learn, oh, man, wherein thou art great and precious. Is there anything so precious as the likeness"[5] thou bearest to a God of infinite majesty and beauty? A spirit like God, one like God, living like God, immortal like God, the great soul of the great God. And this is the reason, says St. Ambrose, why He who created all other things without interruption, rested after having created the human soul: "And He rested from all His work, which He had done."[6] As if there could be nothing of greater importance, or more precious to be made; nothing which would show forth more clearly His power and wisdom.

God values it highly.

Yet, what we have seen up to this makes very little impression on us, blind mortals, since we cannot see our souls with our bodily eyes. Learn, then, how valuable they are, from the high

[1] Fiat! Fiat lux! Et facta est lux.—Gen. i. 3. [2] Dixit et facta sunt.—Ps. cxlviii. 5.
[3] Faciamus!
[4] Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.—Gen. i 26.
[5] Disce, ubi grandis, ubi pretiosus sis! An quidquam tam pretiosum quam imago hæc?
[6] Requievit ab universo opere, quod patraverat.—Gen. ii. 2.

price which the Almighty God, who values all things according to their worth, puts on them. Lucius Mummius, a noble Roman, who was more skilled in war than in works of art, sold a painting to King Attalus, and left the price of it to the judgment of the latter. The king paid him such a large sum of money, that it seemed impossible to count it. Lucius, surprised and amazed at seeing such a high price paid for the painting, the history says, "thinking that there was some hidden virtue in the picture, which he knew not of before, took it back and would not sell it."[1] Oh, man, what a precious image you have in your soul! You do not understand nor grasp it yourself, and, therefore, you often think but little of it. But see what a treasure the King of Heaven pays for it, and you will be surprised. St. Eusebius says: "If you do not believe your Creator as to the value of your soul, ask your Redeemer."[2] Ask Him why did He come down from Heaven, why was He born in a stable, why did He lie weeping in a manger, why was He brought up in poverty, so that He had to earn His bread in a workshop, by the sweat of His brow? The answer will be, as St. Augustine says: "Oh, my soul! exalt thyself; thou art worth all that."[3] It is the price that God has paid for thee! Count the hours of His thirty-three years' life upon earth, the sighs He gave, the tears He shed, the thoughts He had, the words He spoke, the stripes He received, the thorns that pierced Him, the nails that bore through His hands and feet, the drops of blood that He shed; contemplate the gibbet on which He hung, the shame and loss of honor that He suffered, the life that was taken from Him, the spirit, the soul that He gave up; all these things cry out to thee: Oh, my soul! thou art worth all these things![4] Why dost thou wonder at the heavens, the sun, the stars in the firmament? Oh, soul, consider thyself, for thou art much more precious, much more beautiful, than all the beautiful ornaments of the heavens! Sometimes thou thinkest a great deal of the world and all its wealth and magnificence; soul of man, it is not worthy of thee; thou art much more valuable. Thou hast cost as much as the greatness of thy God; and that is neither Heaven, nor earth, nor gold, nor riches; but the Blood, the Soul, the Life, nay His very self that God has given for thee. Therefore, thou must be a very precious image indeed! Thou hast not known thyself hitherto, but

[1] Suspicatus aliquid in ea esse virtutis, quod ipse nesciret, revocavit tabulam.
[2] Quam pretiosus sis, si Factori forte non credis, interroga Redemptorem.
[3] O anima! erige te, tantum vales! [4] O anima! tantum vales!

believe Him who best understands the matter, and who, to purchase thee, offered everything He had to His eternal Father!

Even the devil values it highly.

Even the sworn enemy of souls, the devil, cannot conceal the great value He sets on thee, oh, human soul! He has already thought the whole world not too much to offer for a single sin which would injure the soul. He showed Christ all the riches of the world: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me."[1] What trouble does he not give himself day and night to gain a single soul! How carefully does he not seek out wicked advisers, treacherous companions, bad books, impure company, seductive and bad habits and occasions, in order to catch a soul! Although he is the King of pride and Prince of vanity, yet he is not ashamed to perform the meanest services. He puts on, sometimes, the appearance of the lowest servant and drudge. Sometimes he serves those who are inclined to infidelity, as a shepherd, a cowherd, or a swineherd, and keeps their cattle safe for them. At other times he acts as a horse and beast of burden for the sorcerers and witches who give their souls to him; nay, although, as theologians teach, every soul that goes to hell increases his torments, he still suffers all that, as long as he can lead souls astray. Oh, can I not now say, oh, human soul, how precious thou art? If thou wilt not believe thy Maker, oh, man, who fashioned it to His likeness, nor thy Redeemer, who paid so dearly for it, then ask thy enemy, the devil, what value he puts upon thy soul.

Therefore the servants of God labor so hard to gain a soul.

In days gone by the merchants of the world were surprised, and looked upon it as madness and folly when they saw men like St. Francis Xavier. They are surprised even now, when they see and hear how many apostolic priests leave their native land, undertake dangerous voyages across the seas, and go to the remote Indies and the far-off islands, where, under a foreign sky, in a hot climate, amongst uncivilized people, they labor day and night, in hunger and thirst, in constant danger of death, and for the mere purpose of gaining a soul to Christ and bringing it to Heaven. Oh, ye merchants, how simple ye are! If you knew anything of the matter, and understood what a precious image a soul is, you would be much more astonished at your own folly, in undergoing so much trouble and labor on the same sea, and in the same island, and that you expose yourselves to the same danger, only to gain a temporal, an uncertain and a short-lived good, in the struggle for which you often lose sight of your souls. If you come home after a long absence (which is merely a chance),

[1] Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.—Matth. iv. 9.

what do you bring with you? A ship laden with merchandise, and nothing more. Let twenty, thirty, or even a hundred of you return with millions of money. If, meanwhile, a zealous missionary, laboring among those savage people for twenty years, can succeed, with all his toil and trouble, in baptizing only one child in some out-of-the-way place, oh, certainly, he has gained a great deal more than you, with all your riches and treasures! Ask him if he would change his gain with yours. He would not even deign to answer you: for that one soul has repaid his labor and trouble far more richly than if he had gained the whole world.

Even by exposing their lives to danger.

Our Annals speak of some members of our society who, in order to be able to reach the kingdom of Japan, undertook to work in a ship like galley slaves. Why did they do that? In order to gain a soul for God. Ask them if they would have done that for any temporal riches. Another who was shipwrecked, happened to seize hold of a plank, and could have saved his life by means of it; but he gave it up of his own accord to a Jew near him who was on the point of drowning, with the condition, however, that the latter, on reaching the land, would receive baptism and become a Christian. The condition was accepted and the priest joyfully allowed himself to sink into the sea. Why? In order to gain a soul for Heaven that would otherwise have been lost. Ask him if he would have done that to gain all the wealth of the world. Such people as these know the worth of a precious soul purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ. Continue as you have begun, zealous merchants of souls! Go to those countries where so many thousand souls are in ignorance and idolatry. If you can save a soul from committing even one sin, it is well worth your while to travel about the world. Oh, would that a similar zeal brought me, and others too, to those countries! But, alas, what am I saying? Come back, I might well exclaim, zealous hunters of souls; we want you here, here in the midst of Christendom, in the broad day-light, in the sunshine of the true faith, even here—alas! that I must say so—souls are held in little value by the majority of people! This is what I have to complain of in the

Second Part.

Yet the soul is little valued by the majority. This explained by a simile.

St. John Chrysostom, writing of the deplorable carelessness with which people look upon their own souls, tells a story of a philosopher who went into a magnificent house. The rooms of this house were hung with gold and silver tapestry, even the floors were covered with silken carpets, while the master of the house,

who brought the philosopher into it, went about meanly and poorly clad. When the visitor had spent some time admiring all he saw, and having looked at all the splendor around him, he (pardon the expression) spat in the face of the master of the house. The latter indignantly protested against this insult, but the philosopher answered him, saying: I was compelled to spit out, and I could find no other place to do so in but your face. Giving him thereby to understand that while he adorned the walls and floors of his house in such a costly manner, he paid so little attention to his own person. The majority of Christians in the world, says St. Chrysostom, act in the same manner. They take a great deal of care of the house, and forget its master; that is to say, they look after the body very diligently, but forget the soul, which dwells in the body, as in a house.

As a general rule, the body is more cared for than the soul.

All the serious thoughts of the day, from morning till night, are given to the body, which is only a mass of uncleanness, and a whitened sepulchre, that will soon be food for worms; while hardly one in a week is bestowed on the soul, the immortal image of God! The best years of youth are spent in the service of the body; how few the hours that are given to the eternal welfare of the soul! The body is petted, fed, and nourished to repletion every day, and is allowed to want for nothing; the soul must often suffer hunger for a month at a time, receiving no refreshment either from the Word of God or from the holy Sacraments. The body is washed, clothed, adorned, beautified, and decked out in every way, and art is even made use of to supply the defects of nature, so that the body may please others, and sometimes betray them into sin; but the soul is left without merits and good works, neglected like a poor beggar child. A spot on the face or hands is washed off immediately; while the stain of sin is often allowed to remain on the soul from one month to another, from one Easter to another, before the water of true repentance is used to wash it off. No expense is spared to procure pleasure for the body: the night's rest is often sacrificed, the whole day is occupied and no end of trouble is taken for that purpose; but to give the soul an hour's devotion in the morning, to part with the twentieth part of one's superfluous wealth for the poor, or to take any trouble at all for the soul's welfare, would be an intolerable burden.

Bodily health and life are preferred to spiritual.

To preserve the health of the body, we avoid even a cold wind, while the soul is risked in all kinds of ways for a mere trifle. If the body is ill, the best and most experienced doctors are called in;

if the soul is ill, we are often afraid of going to a confessor who is most skilled in affairs of conscience, we dread going to sermons in which the truth is told for the good of the soul. In order to cure bodily illness thoroughly, we seek a change of air, and leave our home and country to do so, while we cannot resolve to fly the poisoned air of the world in order to restore our sick souls to health; that is to say, we are unwilling to give up the unlawful and useless vanities of the world, or to avoid bad company and the dangerous occasions of sin; all of which we should renounce if our repentance were sincere. To preserve the health of our mortal bodies we abstain from our favorite food and drink, we refuse not the most bitter medicines; but to preserve the eternal life of the soul and to atone to the divine justice for the sins we have committed, we refuse to mortify or deny ourselves, to fast or to do penance as a Christian should. If the body of another dies we grieve and mourn; if a soul dies we are unmoved. If the news is brought to a father or mother that their son or daughter has accidentally broken an arm or a leg, what wailing and lamentation there will be! If their souls receive a mortal wound, of which, perhaps, the parents are the cause, by allowing their children to go into the dangerous occasion of sin, it is looked upon as a matter of little importance. "Oh, blindness," cries out St. Augustine; "you mourn for the death of the body, which must die in a short time in any case, and you do not mourn the death of the soul, which ought to live forever." You grieve that the body has lost the soul that animated it, although it will be again united to the soul at the last day, and you are not sorry when the soul loses God, whom she will perhaps never regain again! So much care is taken of the house, so little of the master of it, the image of God, the precious soul!

The soul is sold for a miserable price.

And, what we cannot sufficiently deplore, oh, soul so dearly bought by God, how cheaply men sometimes barter thee, to their eternal damnation! As the Prophet Jeremias says in the person of the sinner: "I have given my dear soul into the hand of her enemies."[1] For, sinners give the souls of others into the hands of their sworn enemies by leading them into sin, and their own souls by the sins they voluntarily commit. And for what price? These souls that have cost the life-blood of Jesus Christ, what do men sell them for? God says, by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel: "And they violated me for a handful of barley and a piece of bread."[2]

[1] Dedi dilectam animam meam in manum inimicorum ejus.—Jerem. xii. 7.
[2] Violabant me propter pusillum hordei et fragmen panis.—Ezech. xiii. 19.

How often is the soul given over to the devil, by a Judas-like treachery, without any contract or agreement as to the price to be paid for it; that being left altogether to the enemy of the soul: "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?"[1] The unjust and avaricious man says to the devil: What will you give me for my soul? And the devil answers: Ten dollars, for which you must swear a false oath; a dollar, for which you must cheat your neighbor, protract his lawsuit, or injure his business; five dollars, which you may keep, although you have no right to do so; one dollar, which you must give to an immoral man for a bad purpose. Very well, thinks the sinner, the price is enough; I will deliver it up to you.[2] I will give you my soul, take it away with you! What will you give me?[3] asks the immoral man, what will you give me for my soul? A brief pleasure, that may be enjoyed by an immodest look, by an impure touch, by a filthy imagination. It is enough; take my soul with you, and do as you please with it. The ambitious man asks: What will you give me for my soul? The favor of your master, promotion to a higher position. Very well, you can take my soul. What will you give me for my soul? asks another. The satisfaction of your gluttony by immoderate drinking; the vengeance that you require to cool your hatred and anger; the covering of your shame, by concealing a sin in confession. Agreed; I will deliver up my soul to you. Ah, how often the precious soul is given up for a still viler price, and without any gain, any profit or pleasure whatever! How often, oh, sinner, have you not given up your soul without being paid for it? You commit a sin to-day for a price that you are not to receive till years have elapsed. How often have you gained nothing by your sin but disappointed hopes, difficulties, chagrin, and unhappiness! nothing but shame and disgrace before God and man!

What blindness! Shown by an example.

"What madness;" cries out St. Bernard with justice! "What madness! to value souls so cheaply which even the devil looks upon as precious!"[4] What must the foul fiend think, when he sees he can have for a few cents, so to speak, that soul for which he once offered the whole world? That soul for which the Creator gave His life's blood! Ah, Christian! hear what St. Peter Chrysologus says: "Why is it that you value yourself so cheaply, although God values you so highly?"[5] In the year 1558, as we

[1] Quid vultis mihi dare, et ego vobis eum tradam?—Matth. xxvi. 15.
[2] Ego eum vobis tradam. [3] Quid vultis mihi dare?
[4] Quis furor, tam viles animas habere, quas etiam dæmon tam pretiosas habet!
[5] Quare tibi tam vilis es, qui tam pretiosus es Deo?

read in the Annals of our Society, there was in Brazil a young girl, who was converted to the Catholic faith, and who, through her ardent love of God, made a vow of perpetual chastity. She was afterwards sold as a slave to a Christian, an impure man, who, like a savage wolf, tried to compel this poor lamb to consent to his wicked desires. The pious girl defended herself as long as she could, and at last, inspired by God, she adopted the following means: She hung a crucifix around her neck, thinking to herself: My master, who is a Christian, will see this image of his Redeemer and will respect it, and leave me in peace. When the abandoned man again attacked her, and she saw herself in great danger, she took the crucifix in her hand, threw herself down at her master's feet, and said to him: Think at least of the great God, whose image I hold in my hand, who shed His blood, and suffered so many torments in order to purchase your soul and mine! Ah, I beg of you, do not disgrace the soul that Christ paid so dearly for! If you continue to offer violence to me, the God who esteems your soul and mine so highly will take vengeance on you! At these words the wicked man entered into himself, begged pardon and gave the heroic slave her freedom. Ah, Christians, think of this in all temptations to sin! Keep the crucified Jesus, if not in your hands, at least in your memory. Think to yourselves: Shall I so shamefully disgrace my soul, which cost the life of the Son of God? And woe to you who betray souls! How Jesus will avenge Himself on you, for having given over to the devil by your flattery, seduction, and wicked conversation and teaching, the soul that he loves and esteems so highly!

Conclusion, and exhortation to all Christians to be careful of their souls.

I conclude with the words of the wise Sirach: "My son, keep thy soul, and honor it as it deserves."[1] St. Francis Xavier used sometimes to embrace, with both arms, the men who went to confession to him, shake them in a friendly manner, and say to them with the impressive zeal of an apostolic spirit, these words: "Ah, my child, keep this soul, preserve this soul, for it costs an immense price!" My dear brethren, I wish I could cry out to you all in the same zealous and impressive manner: Keep your souls. Oh, ye children, who are still young, fly carefully all occasions and dangers of sin, that you may not lose your precious souls! Oh, parents, watch over the souls of your children with the greatest care! God will one day require them at your hands,

[1] Fili! serva animam tuam, et da illi honorem secundum meritum suum.

and woe to you, if they are lost through your carelessness! How and whether your children are dressed, how they make their way in the world, what wealth you leave behind for them—these are the least important things committed to your care. How and whether they live piously, how you lead them on to devotion and to the love and service of God, how you keep them from sin, and from its dangerous occasions, in a word, what you do to bring them to your Creator in Heaven—that is the most important, nay, as far as your duty as father or mother is concerned, it is the only duty that God expects you to perform, under pain of eternal damnation. Oh, what zealous spiritual guides you might be, what joy you could give to God and His angels, if you only earnestly wished! Oh, you, who are rich and well off, keep your souls,[1] for they are your chief wealth. Never forget the words of Jesus Christ: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world?"[2] You who are poor and needy, be patient under your poverty; you have a soul as precious as any king or prince in the world. Ah, keep this soul, your best possession, and you will be rich and happy enough! Good and pious Christians, continue to guard your souls always! Sinners, take pity on your souls, and, without delaying any longer, resolve to save them from the claws of the devil by a true repentance and amendment of life! And to each and every one of you, no matter what your condition may be, I say: Keep your soul! Amen.

NINETEENTH SERMON.

ON THE CARE OF ONE'S ONLY SOUL.

Subject.

1. We have only one soul, and, therefore, even if it were not so precious, we ought to be most careful of it. 2. Yet, generally speaking, men treat their souls as if they each had thousands of them to lose.—*Preached on the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domine, filia mea modo defuncta est; sed veni, impone manum tuam super eam, et vivet.—Matth. ix. 18.

[1] Serva animam tuam! [2] Quid prodest homini?

"Lord, my daughter is even now dead: but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

Introduction.

No wonder that the Ruler was grieved and troubled, and that he sought help from Jesus Christ. He had lost a member of his family, his only daughter, by death; and what father or mother is not sorry for the loss of a child? Yes, what saddened him most was the fact that she was his only daughter, as St. Luke the Evangelist plainly says: "For he had an only daughter, almost twelve years old, and she was dying."[1] If this only daughter had died, he would have had no other; therefore he was so anxious for her to live. My dear brethren, in my last sermon I have shown you how precious the soul is, and how deplorably careless most men are, in allowing their souls to die and to be lost. And now I say, as the subject of this sermon—

Plan of Discourse.

We have only one soul, and, therefore, even if it were not so precious, we ought to be most careful of it. Such, in a few words, is the subject of the first part. And yet, generally speaking, men treat their souls as if they each had thousands of them to lose. Such will be the complaint of the second part.

Virgin Mother Mary, thou hast, in thy very childhood, offered thyself to serve thy Creator perfectly with body and soul. Obtain now for us all from thy beloved Son, that He may give us, through our guardian angels, the grace to offer up our only soul to God, after thy example, and to keep it to eternal life!

What we can have only once, is highly prized and well cared for.

The proverb says: That which is rare, of which we cannot have much, is dear and costly,[2] and is carefully preserved. If gold and silver were as common and plentiful as stones, they might be used in place of the latter to pave the streets with.

But since they are the rarest of metals, they are also the most precious, and everything else may be purchased with them. Why are pearls and diamonds so highly valued? Because they are so rare. The rarest flower, no matter what its appearance may be, is looked upon by florists as the dearest and most precious. Now, if a thing, that is already precious in itself, is unique, so that one can have it only once, then it is beyond price. If there was only

[1] Quia unica filia erat ei, fere annorum duodecim, et hæc moriebatur.—Luke viii. 42.
[2] Quod rarum, carum.

one painting in the world, by a celebrated painter like Apelles, no monarch would be rich enough to buy it. If parents have only one son, and no other child, how much do they not love him? With what care, or to speak more truly, with what superstitious anxiety do they not look after him day and night, so as to keep him from harm and danger? All the servants in the house must be on the alert, if the child goes about anywhere by himself, to see that he does not fall. How his mother weeps and laments, if he gets sick! How she almost loses her senses, if he is in danger of death! But, my good people, why all this trouble? Is there anything particular in the child? Yes, everything for us. It is the only child we have, the only heir to our property, the only hope of our posterity, the only comfort of our life; if we lose him, we have no other, and all the joy and hope of our lives is gone too, as far as this world is concerned. In order to express the great and tender love he felt for Jonathan, David could find nothing better to compare it to, than the love of a mother for her only son. He says: "As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee."[1] As if there were no greater love on earth than this.

Christ Himself says the same.

Christ our Redeemer Himself never showed more compassion in His mortal life, than when an only child fell sick, or died. He heard of the mortal illness of Lazarus, whose friends implored His help. Martha and Magdalen, the sisters of Lazarus, implored our Lord to come and help their brother and cure him. Lazarus was also the friend and host of our Lord: but still He would not yield. He waited four days before raising the dead to life. On the contrary, in the case of the widow of Naim, He was present without being asked, He consoled the afflicted mother, restored her son to life and gave him back to her again.[2] Why? Because, as St. Gregory Nyssenus says, she had only one son, according to what the sacred Scripture says: "Behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother."[3] In the same way, we read in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, when the Ruler came to Christ and begged of Him to come and heal his son, who was dying, our Lord refused to go with him, although He restored the son to life at the repeated prayer of the father. While, on the other hand, as we read in to-day's Gospel, He went at once at the prayer of Jairus, whose daughter was dying, and restored her to life. Why was He so ready in the second instance?

[1] Sicut mater unicum amat filium, ita ergo te diligebam.—II. Kings i. 26.
[2] Dedit illum matri suæ. [3] Ecce defunctus efferebatur, filius unicus matris suæ.—Luke vii. 12.

"For he had an only daughter, and she was dying."[1] Behold the reason, says St. Thomas Aquinas: As she was an only daughter, the Saviour's pity was at once excited, and He went down to the house to raise her from the dead, to restore her to life. So highly, my dear brethren, do men prize anything that is unique.

Man has but one soul, and much depends on its being cared for.

Now, oh, man, God has given you only one soul; tell me, for what purpose must you look after that soul? For the eternal joys of Heaven. If you neglect it, what will become of it? It will burn in hell for all eternity. There is no other alternative; it must be in Heaven or in hell for all eternity. You see, then, how much depends on caring properly for your soul. Now I ask you, how many souls have you either to care for, or to neglect? Have you a thousand? a hundred? twenty? Have you two souls? No! And how many, then? Only one soul, one single soul. Only once can you have this soul! It is the one most beautiful flower, that you can have only once. It is your only son, your only dove, your only spouse, as the sacred Scripture says. If you lose this one soul, you have lost everything for eternity! Ah, says St. John Chrysostom, mark this well: God has given you two eyes to see with, two ears to hear with, two hands to feel, two feet to walk; if one of them is injured you can use the other. "But He has given us only one soul; if we lose that, how can we live?"[2]

Therefore it must be cared for most attentively.

Now, if a mother takes such care and trouble, day and night, of her only son, that she may not lose him; if a monarch keeps the one rare picture that he has, so carefully that it may not be injured; if even a gardener is so careful of the one flower, because it is the only one of the kind, that it may not be stolen from him; how much greater care should you not then take of your one immortal soul, that it may not be lost forever? Can any care you take of it be even great enough? You have two eyes, ears, hands and feet; if I wanted one of them from you, what would you ask for it? If I wished to put out one of your eyes, what should I give you in return? If I wanted to cut off one of your hands or feet, how dear would you value it? Would you give it to me for a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand pounds? What! you would think, are you mad to try to drive such a strange bargain with me? No, I will not sell you my eye, my hand, or my foot for such a price. And why not? You would have another eye, another hand, another foot remaining.

[1] Quia unica filia erat ei, et hæc moriebatur.

[2] Animam vero dedit unam nobis: si hanc perdiderimus, quanam vivemus?

No matter, you would say, I will keep them both; away with you, I will not sell any of them to you. See now, oh, man, you have only one soul; what price do you put on it? The question that Christ asks in the Gospel of St. Matthew is: "What exchange shall a man give for his soul?"[1] Ah! "Strive for justice for thy soul, even unto death."[2] The Blessed Ægidius, a companion of the Seraphic Father St. Francis, used to say: If the world was full of men, and it was certain that only one of them would be saved, every one should strive to be the one who would bring his soul to Heaven; therefore, each one should now care for his soul with as much diligence and attention as if it alone were to be saved; for the salvation of his soul is as much to each individual, as that of all other men is to them; and if one man loses his soul, his loss is not less than it would be, if all men were damned.

What David did.

This was the care that the Prophet David, always and at all times, took most to heart, for he said: "My soul is continually in my hands."[3] Mark the expression, my dear brethren. If you offer a petition, or a memorial to a great man, and beg of him not to forget it, if he is inclined to show you how anxious he is to serve your interests, he will say to you: It shall not leave my hands. In the same way, David wished to show the ceaseless care and anxiety that he had for his soul's salvation, by the words quoted above: I love my soul so dearly, that I keep it always in my hands, so as not to lose it. With the same care, says St. Bernard, speaking of this passage, should each one of us look after his soul: "As we do not easily forget what we hold in our hands, so we must never forget the business of our souls."[4]

The great blindness of those who care so little for their souls.

But, what happens in reality? What care do we take of our only soul? When the Portuguese, in former times, took the fortress of Socotra in the Indies, they put all to the sword so fiercely, that only two persons, who had hidden themselves away, remained alive. One of these was a blind man, who had crept into a dry well. The general, having discovered the two men, asked the blind man how he managed to find his way into the well. "Oh," said the latter, "the blind can find nothing so easily as the means of saving their life; because they have only one life." Ah, Christians, is it possible that the most of us are

[1] Quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?—Matth. xvi. 26.
[2] Agonizare pro anima tua!—Eccl. iv. 33.
[3] Anima mea in manibus meis semper.—Ps. cxviii. 109.
[4] Sicut, quod in manibus tenemus, non facile obliviscimur, sic nunquam obliviscamur negotium animarum nostrarum.

blinder than that man? That we, who have only one soul, cannot find the way to save it from eternal death? Yes, alas, it is so! Of our only soul, of which we should take the greatest and most unceasing care, we take the least care of all, as if we had a thousand of them to lose. As I shall show in the

Second Part.

The care we should take of our soul. Shown by an example from the Sacred Scripture.

The Patriarch Jacob, when on the way with all his family to his native land, saw from afar his brother Esau, who hated him bitterly, approaching with four hundred armed men. What was he to do? Filled with apprehension, he could only look forward to the destruction of himself and his family. What plan did he at last follow in this great danger? He placed his cattle in battle array: the worst in front, the next best after them, while he kept the horses and camels in the rear. In the same way he arranged the people of his party. "And he divided the children of Lia and of Rachel and of the two handmaids; and he put both the handmaids and their children foremost; and Lia and her children in the second place; and Rachel and Joseph last."[1] What did Jacob mean by that arrangement? Was he thinking of attacking Esau, and giving him battle? But how could he fight with sheep and cattle, with women and children against armed soldiers? What was his intention, then? Listen and you will hear it. He thought to himself: "If Esau come," as an enemy, against me, "and shall destroy one company, the other company that is left shall escape."[2] He meant by that, to say: If my brother attacks me, I cannot defend myself; I must lose part of my people and property. Therefore, I will at least place in safety that which I love most, so that while he is occupied with the first company, the rest may have time to save themselves by flight. And even if he destroys the second company, my beloved Rachel and Joseph shall still be able to save their lives. If I save them, I shall not care much for the loss of the others. We learn from this, as Oleaster says, that to preserve what is dearest to us, we readily give up everything else we have.

We do the contrary.

My dear brethren, every day, nay, every hour, we are met on the road to our heavenly country by our greatest and sworn enemies, the devil with his temptations, the vain world with its

[1] Divisitque filios Liæ et Rachel, ambarumque famularum. Et posuit utramque ancillam et liberos earum in principio, Liam vero et filios ejus in secundo loco, Rachel autem et Joseph novissimos.—Gen. xxxiii. 1, 2.

[2] Si venerit Esau ad unam turmam, et percusserit eam, alia turma, quæ reliqua est, salvabitur.—Ibid xxxii. 8.

bad example and illusions, the flesh with its seductions and sinful desires. These are all so many highway robbers who fight against us far more bitterly than ever Esau did against Jacob. Sometimes we must give up a sensual pleasure, at other times a temporal gain, or the love of some creature, for the sake of our soul. How do we behave in this dangerous contest? What sort of an arrangement do we make? In order to save what is best and dearest we ought to expose all the other things readily. But, alas, the arrangement we make is altogether different to that of the prudent Jacob! The beautiful Rachel, the beloved Joseph, our only soul is placed in front and exposed to danger. If one company shall be destroyed, the other company that is left will be saved, we think in reality. If the enemy destroys what is in front, the other things are at least secured to us. If the devil takes away my soul, it is not much matter; I shall still have the temporal gain, the sensual pleasure, or the love of the creature.

Explained by another example.

When highway robbers meet a person in the forest, they draw their swords, or raise their clubs, and say to him: Your money or your life! Quick! there is no time for reflection! Alas, thinks the unfortunate traveller, I cannot give away my life, I have only one; if I cannot preserve it otherwise, then take my money and all that I have. In the same way, we may say, the highway robbers cry out to our conscience when we are tempted against the commandments of God: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, etc.[1] You must give us your soul! or else lose that stolen property, and whatever else you have unjustly. Your soul! or else you must give up committing adultery; you must not, even in thought, desire your neighbor's wife, nor in any way whatever yield to sensual gratification. Your soul! or else you must declare your secret sin in confession. Your soul! or else you must give up hatred and anger against your neighbor. Your soul! or else you must leave that house, the proximate occasion of sin, and the company of that person, whom you like so much. Your soul! or else you must reform your bad habits and avoid idleness, and give up drinking and gambling, etc. Quick! you have no time for reflection! But that last word need not be said to us; our minds are already made up. And how? Is it like the traveller? Do we say, I have only one soul, if I cannot save it otherwise, then away with everything else that I have, wish for, love, or desire? So should

[1] Non occides, non mœchaberis, non furtum facies, etc.

we act, such should always be our resolve; yet it is the case with the fewest. And how do the others act? Alas, they say, I cannot give up my money, or my hatred, my love, the company and customs that are dear to me, the usages of the world, or the manner in which I have been living hitherto! I am too fond of them! Take my soul, if I must lose it, in order to keep the other things. Such is the resolution that each one makes who is guilty of a grievous sin of omission or commission against the law of God. Such is the way in which we abandon our only, most precious, and most beautiful soul, at the least difficulty or discomfort, and deliver it into the hands of our robbers and murderers.

How that displeases God.

Oh, how justly is not God incensed at such conduct! We know from the sacred Scriptures what pleasure and joy He had in the obedience of the Patriarch Abraham. He had commanded him: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest; and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust."[1] Abraham made no opposition, but was ready at once. He even had raised the sword to slay the innocent Isaac: "And behold, an angel of the Lord from Heaven called to him," hold, Abraham: "lay not thy hand upon the boy; neither do thou anything to him; now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake,"[2] and that thou lovest God truly. And then the Lord swore to him: "Because thou hast done this thing,"—mark those words, "this thing," by which he showed the heroism of his obedience—"and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake;" because thou art ready to give to Me and to sacrifice thy only son, thy only heir, thy only comfort in this world, "I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."[3] Ah, my God, I wish that I could now weep tears of blood, and lament like Jeremias, when I think that Thy sworn enemy, the rebel Lucifer, the foul fiend of hell, can boast more than Thou, that he has found not merely one Abraham on earth ready to sacrifice his only son to him, but thousands of faithful servants of both sexes, who are ready at the least sign to sacrifice to him their only son, whenever and wherever he wills!

[1] Tolle filium tuum unigenitum, quam diligis Isaac, et vade in terram visionis, atque ibi offeres eum in holocaustum.—Gen. xxii. 2.

[2] Et ecce, angelus Domini de cœlo clamabat: Non extendas manum tuam super puerum, neque facias ille quidquam. Nunc cognovi, quod timeas Dominum, et non pepercisti unigenito filio tuo propter me.—Ibid. 11, 12.

[3] Quia fecisti hanc rem, et non perpercisti filio tuo propterme, benedicam tibi, etc.— Ibid. 16-18.

In that way the majority sacrifice their souls to the devil.

Terrible thought! and yet it is true, every day proves it. All Christians know well that to give consent to an immodest thought, an impure look, a deliberate desire of revenge, in a word, any grievous offence against the law of God, is enough to sacrifice their souls to the eternal flames of hell; and yet, what happens? Very often the devil need do no more than say, with his wicked inspirations: "Take thy only begotten son,"[1] thy one only soul, and slay it in my honor, in that house there, by deliberate drunkenness. Take thy one only soul,[2] and sacrifice it to me, at every opportunity, by impurity. Take thy one only soul, and give it to me there, by an act of injustice. Take thy one only soul, and immolate it to me by a vain and scandalous manner of dressing, etc. And, at once, without opposition, they obey, like Abraham sacrificing his son. Nay, with a far more ready obedience do they offer a far more precious sacrifice; for, to slay one's son is to slay one's own flesh and blood; but to sacrifice one's soul is, in a manner, to sacrifice the Blood of Jesus Christ, which is the price of that soul. And that is the sacrifice you offer, oh, sinner, to the foul fiend, and not merely once, but twenty, a hundred, a thousand times, as often as you commit sin! What a gross injustice to God, your Creator! What a deplorable indifference to your one, only, and precious soul!

Many think so little of the loss of their souls.

It is true, they say, but we are weak mortals! In temptations and occasions of sin one gets upset, one hardly thinks of the loss of the soul, or of sacrificing it in that way to the devil. What? You do not think of that? Why, that is the very thing that cannot be sufficiently deplored, for it is an evident sign that very little care is taken of the soul. Suppose a thief comes suddenly into your house; you think of your money at once, and do all you can to prevent it from being stolen from you. And why? Because you love your money; but if a miserable temptation to sin comes to you, to steal away your soul, you do not think of your soul, as you yourself acknowledge; and why? Because you do not think so much of your soul as you do of your money. Now, suppose that you have lost your soul; what do you do? What proof do you give that you grieve for that loss, and are afflicted at it above all things? A poor man comes home sad and melancholy; he refuses to eat and drink; he sighs and groans: Oh, what a wretched man I am! But what is the matter with you, my good friend? Alas, I have spent so much money on that law-suit and have lost it after all! Oh, what an unhappy

[1] Tolle filium tuum unigenitum. [2] Tolle animam tuam.

man I am! There comes a citizen, weeping and moaning: Unfortunate man that I am! What is wrong with you? What is the matter with you? My house is pulled down to the ground; where can I go to now? God help me! Here comes a woman weeping, and refusing to be comforted. What has happened to her? Oh, I have lost my best ring with a valuable diamond; God help me! There is a man running about in the forest, up and down hill, whistling and shouting, full of uneasiness and anxiety; what is the matter with him? Oh, my best hunting dog has run away from me; I would not lose him for a good deal! Ah, let me cry out here, with St. Cyprian, God help us! A lost law-suit, a tumble-down house, a lost diamond, a runaway dog are mourned and grieved for; but a Christian loses his only soul, and where are his tears? Where his sorrow and grief? He thinks nothing of it; it does not even occur to him that he has lost it. He can laugh and sleep quietly, and renew his loss every day, as if his soul were nothing to him. St. Cyprian says: "Wretched man, you have lost your soul, and you do not weep bitterly!"[1] You can see from that, that the care of your only soul is that which troubles you least of all.

Some help the devil to ruin the souls of others.

Finally, what can we say of those agents of the devil, who not only neglect the care of their own souls, but also drive a trade with the souls of others, in order to sell them to the devil? I mean those who, by immodesty in dress, seductive and impure conversations, or by open violence, endeavor to betray the innocent and to lead them into sin. To this class, too, belong many parents, who bring up their children, not in the fear of God, as they ought, but in the vanity of the world and its dangers. Woe to them! Fearful will be the vengeance which the just anger of God will take on these robbers of souls! When the Prophet Nathan wished to represent the full malice of David's sin to him, by command of God, he used that well-known parable: "There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor,"[2] whose whole riches consisted in one little lamb: "he had nothing at all but one little ewe-lamb."[3] Then the rich man came and took away the poor man's lamb. When he heard of this cruel act, says the Holy Scripture, "David's anger was exceedingly kindled against that man,"[4] and he said to Nathan: "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is a

[1] Animam tuam miser perdidisti, et non acriter plangis!
[2] Duo viri erant in civitate una, unus dives et alter pauper.—II. Kings xii. 1.
[3] Nihil habebat omnino præter unam ovem parvulam.—Ibid. 3.
[4] Iratus autem indignatione David adversus hominem illum nimis.—Ibid. 5.

child of death. He shall restore the ewe fourfold."[1] And David was right; but, "Thou art the man,"[2] said Nathan to him; thou art he who has done this. And in the same way, I say, oh, traitor, oh, traitress, thou art the person of whom the parable speaks! Immoral man! It is you who robbed that unfortunate maiden of her only lamb, by your false promises, for she had only one, and that is her immortal soul, which you have stolen and given to the devil. It is you who by your immoral conversation taught wickedness to that innocent youth, which he would not have learnt otherwise, and thus you have taken from him his only lamb, his immortal soul. Vain girl! Frivolous woman! It is you who, by your immodest dress and manner daily rob so many men of their only lamb, and deliver it over to hell. Father! Mother! You by your unchristian training deprive your children of their only lamb, you steal their souls away from them and sacrifice them to the devil. Woe to you! when the angry Judge and Saviour of all shall demand an account from you of those souls that you have robbed Him of! He will exact a twofold and fourfold satisfaction for them. But, you yourselves have only one soul; how then will you be able to pay what you owe? But you must pay. If one, who sins alone by himself, is condemned to hell in punishment, then you will have a fourfold and manifold hell to suffer.

Conclusion and exhortaiton to care for one's only soul.

My dear brethren, is it not a deplorable thing that we think so little of our one precious soul, and sell it at such a vile price? In the Catholic Church we honor thousands and thousands of martyrs, who most joyfully gave up their honor, position, property, friends, and relations, and went cheerfully to the rack, the cross, the gallows, and the gridiron. Why did they do so? To save their only soul and to bring it to Heaven. We honor so many kings and princes who threw away crown and sceptre, and fled away to lead a hard life in the desert. For what purpose? To place their souls in safety. We honor, and are astonished at so many queens and empresses who changed their costly garments for sackcloth, the pleasures of the palace for the poverty of the convent and the hospital. What induced them to do so? Their only soul, which they wished to keep from danger. Were these people fools, or did they act wisely? Very wisely and prudently have they acted, and that we know in our own consciences. And how is it then that we go against our own judgment, and take

[1] Vivit Dominus, quoniam filius mortis est vir, qui fecit hoc, ovem reddet in quadruplum. —II. Kings xii. 5, 6.

[2] Tu es ille vir.—Ibid. 7.

such little trouble about our souls, which are just as costly, just as dearly bought as theirs, and of which we have only one each, as they had? How is it we do not do more to place our souls in safety and to bring them to eternal salvation? Ah, take care of thy soul,[1] is my conclusion again; oh, man, take care of thy soul! Think of it! Thou hast only one soul, on which everything depends for thee; if that is lost, then thou hast lost all.

Charles, the fifth Roman Emperor of that name, was consulting once with one of his ministers about some state matters; the latter, an unscrupulous man, said to him: "You have a fine opportunity now, your majesty, to bring all these princes, one after another, with all their territories, under your sway, by force of arms." "True," answered Charles, "but what about my soul?"[2] Oh, beautiful answer and worthy of a Christian monarch! Let us also think, my dear brethren, whenever an opportunity presents itself to act against the law of God and our conscience, I could make that profit, I could get hold of that property, I might now make money by fishing in troubled waters, I could now gratify my sensual passion, revenge myself on my enemy, etc. Let us answer immediately: But what will become of my soul? No, away with all the goods, pleasures, and joys of the world! I will save my soul. I would rather be poor and despised and afflicted, so long as I can get to Heaven. A certain gentleman once recommended to Cardinal Bellarmine a very weighty matter, in a petition in which he frequently repeated the words: "I beg of you to take the deepest interest in this affair." Yes, answered the Cardinal, I shall attend to it; but you must know that my deepest interest and greatest care concerns my soul. Let each one say the same for himself, whenever domestic or other duties require his attention and diligence. I will look after my wife and children and will support them decently; I will perform the duties of my office as well as I can before God and the world; I will try not to lose my worldly goods; but my greatest care and diligence will always be for my soul, so that I may save it eternally. Let us say with David: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."[3] One thing I have received from the Lord, this will I try to keep. One soul He has given me, and my endeavor shall be to bring it safely into the house of the Lord for all eternity.

[1] Serva animam tuam!

[2] Sed anima, sed anima?

[3] Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitæ meæ.—Ps. xxvi. 4.

Prayer to God to save our souls.

And Thou, oh, most merciful God, grant me to lay my petition before Thee, in the words which Thou spokest to Satan when he asked permission from Thee to work his will on Job, Thy servant: "Behold he is in thy hand, but yet, save his life."[1] As long as that is safe thou canst do with him what thou wilt. Save his life.[2] The same thing do I say to Thee, oh, God, in the name of all the Christians of this country and city; each of them has a precious soul, purchased by the Blood of Thy Son, and each has but one soul. Oh, Almighty Lord, they are in Thy hands;[3] do with them what Thou wilt! one only request do I make of Thee—save their souls. In other things, do with them as Thou pleasest; take away their health by sickness, their wealth by wars and misfortunes, their food by unfruitful seasons and famine, if that is for Thy honor and glory and their greater good; chastise, punish, torment, kill them, but save their souls,[4] keep them from mortal sin, strengthen them in temptations and seductions, that they may not offend Thee and be lost forever. As far as I am concerned, oh, my God, this is my earnest petition; behold, I am in Thy hands, do with me what Thou wilt; but grant, by Thy powerful grace, that I may save my soul; let me rather die a thousand times than lose my soul by a single sin. Ah, my precious soul, my only soul, if I save thee, I am rich enough for all eternity! Dear Christians, save your souls! Amen.

TWENTIETH SERMON.

ON THE COURSE TO BE FOLLOWED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN SELECTING A STATE IN LIFE.

Subject.

1st. Young people, wishing to enter a state of life, must follow God alone and His vocation. 2d. This is what very few young people do; to this course very few parents advise their children, to the great detriment of both.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Ascendente eo in naviculam secuti sunt eum discipuli ejus.—Matth. viii. 23.

[1] Ecce in manu tua est, verumtamen animam illius serva.—Job ii. 6.
[2] Animam illius serva. [3] Ecce in manu tua sunt.
[4] Verumtamen animam illorum serva.

"And when He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him."

Introduction.

The world is generally compared to a stormy sea, on which men sail, in the midst of countless perils, towards the haven of their heavenly country. But, oh, how many of them suffer shipwreck, and sink, body and soul, into the infernal abyss, because they have not a skilled pilot to guide their ship aright. That is to say, because they have not Jesus as their pilot to save them from danger; or, to speak more clearly, because they do not embark in that ship, because they do not enter on that state of life to which the voice of God calls them. My dear brethren, I have up to this explained how children must act in their youth towards God, their parents, and their own souls; but how must they act when they grow in years, so that it is time for them to separate from their parents, to embark in another ship, to enter on a certain state of life? Oh, here certainly they stand in need of good advice! Now I will give them the very best advice: Children, embark in that ship; parents, exhort your children to embark in that ship to which Jesus leads the way, to select that state of life to which God calls them. And this is the subject of to-day's sermon, namely—

Plan of Discourse.

Young people, wishing to enter on a state of life, must follow God alone and His vocation. Such will be the subject of the first part. This is what very few young people do; to this course very few parents advise their children, to the great detriment of both. The second part. A very useful subject for all of us.

Grant us Thy light and grace, oh, God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy angels guardian!

A weighty business, on which much depends, is not generally begun blindly and without deliberation.

A well-known proverb says that we must deliberate long over a matter that we have only one chance of terminating successfully.[1] No man of sense would think of entering on a weighty business, on which much happiness or misery depends, blindly and without giving the matter due consideration, and taking the advice of experienced men. Otherwise he would expose himself to the risk of failure. For instance, a man has a large sum of money which he wishes to invest in some business; how he thinks and consults before he lets it go out of his hands! How such and such a person

[1] "Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum est semel.

is situated, whether he will be able to pay the yearly interest, whether he has not borrowed money elsewhere, whether his property is unencumbered or mortgaged, whether the business that he carries on is a risky one, or not, etc., etc. All these points and many other similar ones must be cleared up first of all, with the greatest care and exactness, so that a complete knowledge of the man and of his position may be had. And that is quite right, for there is question of a large sum of money, that may be lost in that business. Even in matters of less importance, such as hiring a servant or a housemaid, many questions are asked about the person's fidelity and morality. And that is right, too; for it would be too late to deliberate afterwards, once the agreement is made. If the person is proved not to suit them, the master must put up with the inconvenience till the end of the year. Therefore, we must deliberate for a long time over a matter that we have but one chance of bringing to a successful conclusion.[1]

A most weighty business is the choice of a state of life, because generally the salvation or loss of the soul depends on it.

What shall our son, or our daughter be? is the general question of parents. What state of life shall I enter on? children sometimes ask themselves. Father, mother, children, do you know what depends on this question, and what sort of a business is concerned in it? Is it about hiring a servant, investing money, gaining or losing property? Truly, if the world and its goods depended thereon, I need not lose my time exhorting you to mature deliberation, for such is beyond my line of duty. No, my dear brethren, a much greater and more important business, as we must acknowledge in our hearts, is concerned in this question. It is not enough for the daughter to find a rich husband in the married state, nor for the son to obtain a rich prebend or benefice in the ecclesiastical state, nor is it enough for the son or daughter to enter a well-regulated and holy community in the religious state ; all this will not give a satisfactory solution to the question. The question is about a state of life, on the choice of which generally depends either Heaven or hell for all eternity; the eternal happiness of those young people, or their eternal misery in everlasting fire. And how is that? Cannot God bring all men to Heaven? Of course He can, and will do it too, if we only earnestly ask Him to do so. Can we not save our souls in any state of life? Of course we can; but remember that not every one can work out his salvation in any state, because, according to the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers, a certain state of life is a certain way in which divine Providence, ordering all things in

[1] Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum semel.

number, weight, and measure, leads a certain man to eternal salvation; and to this state God gives for that man suitable helps and powerful graces, which would not be found in another state, and without which that man, although, absolutely speaking, he could, still, generally speaking, would not persevere in good and save his soul, or would do so only with difficulty. It is evident, then, that our salvation does not always depend on the holiness of the state we make choice of, but on the conformity of that state with the will of God, and with the arrangements of His Providence that He made for us from all eternity. Thousands of both sexes have saved their souls in the ecclesiastical state; but that boy or that girl would be eternally lost in it. Thousands of both sexes have lost their souls in the secular state, and yet that boy or that girl will gain Heaven in it. There are thousands now in hell, who, if they had embraced another state of life, would be in Heaven; and there are thousands now happy in Heaven, who would have died miserably and lost their souls, if they had not chosen the state appointed for them by God. Even at this moment there are thousands leading bad lives, who will die an unhappy death and be lost, because they disregarded the divine will in embracing a state of life. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"[1] and at the same time, how just!

Therefore this choice must not be made without taking advice from an experienced person. Such an adviser is not to be found amongst men.

Ah, my dear brethren, there is great need, then, of counsel and deliberation for parents and children, when the question is asked: What shall my son or my daughter be? What state of life shall I embrace? What state has God called me to? In what state can I save my soul according to the decrees of Providence? Who will tell me this? Whom can I ask about it? Whose advice shall I seek? Who can give me salutary counsel in such an important matter, so that I can accept his decision? What sort of knowledge must such an adviser have, do you think? Oh, almost infinite knowledge and understanding! He must be able to penetrate into the divine council-chamber, so as to know what are the hidden decrees regarding me, and the way of my salvation. He must know the order and variety of graces, one after the other, which are prepared for me my whole life long, at all times, in all places and circumstances. He must know if I shall correspond with those graces and in what degree. He must know all the

[1] O altitudo divitiarum, sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei! Quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus, et investigabiles viæ ejus? Rom. xi. 33.

temptations and snares that the devil, the world, and my own flesh will place in my way in the state of life he counsels me to choose. He must foresee all the occasions of good or evil that such a state will offer me, and many other things, too, must he know beforehand, so as to be aware of all the changes of time, age, prosperity, and adversity. He must be able to see into my heart and to know my inclinations and most secret desires. If he is wanting in any degree in this knowledge and experience, he cannot give me certain advice regarding the state of life in which I am to save my soul. But where in the world can I find such an adviser? If Solomon, that wonder of wisdom, came out of his grave, he could not help me. Father, mother, relations, no matter how much you love me and desire my salvation, this is too much for you, this you cannot do. Although my duty obliges me to obey you in all things with the greatest respect and filial love, yet in this matter, I cannot trust to your word and your guidance alone. I do not even know myself thoroughly, as far as the inclinations and weaknesses of my soul are concerned; much less can I know how it will be with me in the future, or what will happen to me in this or that state of life, so that, with regard to my choice of a state, it would be useless for me to have recourse to such advisers.

God alone can and will give safe advice on this point.

It is God, my dear brethren, and God alone who has all the necessary knowledge, and who sees clearly what is good or bad for the soul of each one at all times and in all circumstances. He it is also who uses His knowledge for the greater good of man, when He calls him, by His Providence, to a certain state of life. It is God, and God alone, who has prepared for each one a special grace, called the grace of vocation,[1] by which he will lead each one to the proper state of life; and if any one enters a state of life without that grace, he recedes from the way of salvation and places himself in the way of eternal ruin. It is God, and God alone, who has reserved for Himself the office of decreeing the state of life that each one must embrace, and He never allows any one else to perform this office, even if any one else were capable of doing so. St. Gregory assigns the cause of this: "God," he says, "is the best and most excellent Father of all men; nay, He is the only one whom we can look upon as the Father of both body and soul, and He admits of no rival." When the heroic Mother of the Machabees saw her children undergoing the most cruel tortures at the hands of the executioners, when she saw them

[1] Gratia vocationis.

flayed alive, cut in pieces and boiled, and yet bearing all this with the greatest patience and courage, Ah, she said, my dear children, lift up your eyes to Heaven! "I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all."[1] I am your mother according to the flesh; but the best part of you, your soul, is a masterpiece from the hand of God, your heavenly Father. From this it follows, my dear brethren, that the Lord God alone has the right of directing the vocation of man according to His will, and of prescribing to him a certain state of life; for, it is in this that dominion properly consists, as well as the fatherly care which He has for the soul, the spirit, and the will of man. An earthly father can and must look after the Christian education of his children; he must have a care of their support, nourishment, goods, and property; but in what concerns their own persons, that is their free will in the choice of a state of life. No one but Thou, oh, my God, can direct and ordain therein! And how comes it, asks St. Bernard, that each and every state of life, which constitutes the wonderful diversity of men in the world, receives the name of vocation? One is called to the worldly state, is the general expression, another to the religious, another to the military state, and so on. What is the meaning of that, if not that each one has a certain state appointed for him, to which he is called by God and by His all-wise decrees?

Not to follow His advice is to put one's self in danger of eternal ruin. Shown by an example.

Why do the holy Fathers look upon it as such a great sin to select a state of life without being called to it by God? Certainly, because all states, with the sole exception of that appointed for us by God, are very dangerous and injurious to our salvation; and the man who is where he is not called by God, is, so to speak, out of his proper place. I do not mean to say that it is a mortal sin not to follow the call of God, but I must maintain, with the holy Fathers, that it is placing one's self in great danger of future sins, and so of eternal damnation. Amongst other sad mishaps that the world has experienced in this particular, listen to the following, related by Father Nicholas Lancicius, a man renowned for his writings, as well as for his holy life. I had, he writes, in the Roman Seminary, under my instruction, a lad endowed with the rarest natural gifts, who was a relation of a certain illustrious

[1] Neque enim ego spiritum et animam donavi vobis et vitam, et singulorum membra non ego ipsa compegi, sed enim mundi Creator, qui formavit hominis nativitatem.—II. Machab. vii. 22, 23.

Patriarch. After having, under my direction, made the exercises of our Holy Father Ignatius very devoutly, the young man asked me if it would be a sin not to follow the voice of God calling one to the religious state. On account of certain things that I was aware of, I answered him very cautiously, that it might be done without any apparent grievous sin, since vocation is not a command, but rather a counsel on the part of God; still, that it is certain that many are lost because they do not obey this call of God to the religious state, not precisely on account of losing their vocation, but on account of the many sins into which God foresaw that they would fall in the world, and to preserve them from which He wished to separate them from the world and to call them to the religious state. And such was indeed the case with that young man; for, not long afterwards, he left the Roman College, and went to Macerata to study law. Here he quickly forgot his former pious practices (as many young people do when they are left to themselves, away from their parents in foreign countries); he left off frequent confession and communion; instead of visiting the churches, he spent his time with companions of his own stamp, in gaming and drinking houses; in place of reading spiritual books, he read impure romances; and amongst other sins, which follow such an unrestrained mode of life, he nurtured an impure passion for an abandoned woman. As he was returning home one dark night from her house, he met a rival, who was also attached to the same woman. The meeting took place in the public street, opposite to the gate of the very convent to which he had received a vocation from God. The rival attacked the young man and stabbed him to the heart. The unfortunate youth, weltering in his blood, cried out, with dying voice, for his confessor; but before the latter could reach him, he breathed his last, right before the gate of those religious, amongst whom, according to divine decree, he should have found eternal happiness. Instead of that he found eternal damnation, and verified in himself the terrible sentence: "I called and you refused. You have despised all my counsel. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock. When sudden calamity shall fall on you and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand..... Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear; ..... because they did not consent to my counsel."

[1] **Vocavi et renuistis. Despexistis omne consilium meum. Ego quoque in interitu vestro ridebo et subsanabo. Cum irruerit repentina calamitas, et interritus, quasi tempestas ingruerit.....tunc invobacunt me, et non exaudiam;.....eo quod non acquieverunt consilio meo.—Prov. i. 24-30.**

Many such sad examples may be read in the Annals of our Society, of those who refused to obey a call to the religious state.

All this forces me to the necessary conclusion of the first part. If all states in the world come from divine vocation; if every state is not good for the salvation of every one; if no one in the world can know, or teach me what state is the safest for me; if no man has the right or the power to compel me to embrace a state according to his will; if God alone knows which is the best for my salvation; if God alone will and must direct me herein; if it is dangerous not to follow the call of God, and meanwhile, salvation or damnation depends on the choice of a state, then it follows, of necessity, that it is God, and God alone, whom parents must often and earnestly ask: Oh, Lord, what dost Thou will my child to be? He is in Thy hands, under Thy guidance; Thou alone art the Father of his soul; we leave the disposal of him to Thee; lead and guide him to that state in which Thou wishest him to serve Thee! The necessary consequence, too, is that it is God, and God alone, from whom children especially must ask counsel, and for a long time, by frequent, earnest, and zealous prayer, and, prepared for everything, they must cry out with the Apostle: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"[1] Give to my understanding that light Thou hast promised to those who ask it of Thee, so that I may know how and where I am to live according to Thy vocation and holy will! Oh, if all children acted thus with regard to their state of life; if all parents left their children to be thus disposed of by God, what a heavenly life would each one lead on earth, in the state appointed for him by God! How many souls would then go to Heaven! But, alas, it is God who is least of all asked for counsel in this matter, although it is of the greatest importance; and even when He makes known His will inwardly, He is the last of all to be listened to or obeyed either by parents or children. Therefore, it is no wonder that all are not in the state to which God called them, and consequently that they are not as they would wish to be at the hour of death. No wonder is it that parents make such a gross mistake with their children, and often ruin them forever. As we shall see in the

Consequently, God alone must be asked for advice, by parents and children.

Second Part.

Our Father Masenius, in his Symbols, paints a ship with outspread sails, ready to leave the shore, but without any fixed direction, with this motto: "She is waiting for the wind."[2] As

That is little attended to by most children.

[1] Domine, quid me vis facere?—Acts ix. 6. [2] Exspectat ventos.

who take the first state that offers, without deliberation.

soon as the wind comes the ship goes away. If the wind is from the west, she goes to the east; if it comes from the east, she goes to the west; if it comes from the south, she goes to the north; if from the north, she goes to the south. She waits for the wind.' It is no matter whence the wind comes, or whither it blows. In the same manner, my dear brethren, it seems to me that many children act. When the time comes for them to choose a state of life, they are like ships with their sails set: they let themselves be driven in any direction, wherever the wind wills. They think not, reflect not. The first opportunity that offers seems good and acceptable to them, it is a vocation for them. Their voyage may be to the east or to the west; their state may be either religious or worldly, it may lead their souls to Heaven or to hell—they wait for the wind. Some evening or other, in pleasant company, a young woman attracts the attention of one, a young man that of another, acquaintance is made, an attachment begins, each party hopes that love is mutual. There is a favorable wind, let the ship go: I know what to do, I will get married. Here is one who wishes to resign a benefice in favor of a person who never thought of such a thing, or to procure a benefice for that person: what a favorable wind! The determination is made at once; no time is lost; the necessary orders are received: I will be a secular priest. There is a rich parish vacant, thinks another to himself; can I get votes enough if I apply for it? Yes, the majority are good friends of mine. See what a fair wind is blowing: let there be no delay; I will apply at once; I shall become a parish-priest. Here a lucrative position is vacant: oh, what a fair wind! I shall do my best to obtain it. But he who fills that office must be unmarried. No matter, I accept the condition. Thus in a moment the choice is made, the resolution fixed, in a matter on which the whole of one's after life, as well as eternity, depends. With reason does Seneca say: "You may see many wandering about in uncertainty, who do not what they had intended, but what occurred to them by chance."[2] Whether that marriage so blindly contracted, that chance position in the Church, that parish so luckily obtained, or that office with the condition of celibacy attached, will have a good or bad effect on the soul's salvation, or will give good opportunities for saving one's soul—that question is never even dreamt of, much less is it

[1] Exspectat ventos.

[2] Plerosque videas sine propositio vagari, qui non, quæ destinaverunt agunt, sed in quæ incurrerunt.

maturely considered during waking moments, until the time comes when the state is chosen for life, and reflection is too late.

There are others who wish to act more prudently: they think and reflect for a long time beforehand and very carefully on the state of life they shall choose; but not with Him whom they should consult first of all. Such people seem to me like the sailors of the Eastern Islands, who, not knowing anything of the magnetic needle, and yet wishing to cross the sea, took a certain kind of bird with them, and when they wished to return, let the bird go, and, since it had a natural instinct to go back to its own country, they followed in the direction of its flight. But how unreasonably men act who allow themselves to be guided by unreasoning animals! Birds can show where land is, but they cannot point out where the safe harbors and secure passages are to be found. Therefore, it generally happened that the unlucky ship was driven on the rocks, and broken in pieces.

There are some who take counsel, but not from God.

Not otherwise, I say, do those children enter on the voyage of life, as far as the choice of a state is concerned; they allow themselves to be advised and led by untamed, unreasoning birds, that is to say, either by their bad inclinations and sensuality, or by men who, as I said before, do not and cannot know what is good or bad for their soul's salvation. In that state I can live most comfortably; in that other I can get on better in the world; in this I can have more pleasure; with that person I shall get great riches, and so on; and that is all they think of. They ask: What shall I be? But whom do they ask? Their parents, whose will and pleasure alone they want to know, or their relations or companions, whose advice and example they wish to follow. They leave the magnetic needle which alone can lead them safely: they never consult God, who alone knows the state of life suited to them, nor ask Him for counsel. And what a miserable shipwreck will be the result! What useless repentance and profitless complaints will be sure to follow! What an unhappy, discontented, and wicked life, and what a miserable death must be the result! And even if none of these consequences followed, how can there be any peace of conscience in a state in which one does not know whether he is doing the will of God, or not; in a life which was begun without God, and which, for all one knows, may still be without Him, inasmuch as we cannot know if it is regulated according to His pleasure?

Still it seems easier to excuse young people in this matter, on account of their want of experience. But should not the parents,

Still less is this done by ... ny par-

ents, who follow their own will in fixing a state for their children.

at least, supply what is wanting in their children, by their care and instruction? Should they not often exhort and compel them to have recourse to God, and to pray earnestly for light in such an important matter, and show them how to pray? But, unfortunately, they are often wanting in this duty, in this parental obligation, so strictly enforced by God. Not only do they fail to exhort their children to recommend the matter to God, but they take the selection of a state for their children into their own hands, without taking any account of God. What do you think, or rather, as it is said in reality, what do you wish our son or our daughter to be? Such is the question put to the wife by the husband, and to the husband by the wife. Yes, they say, it will be a difficult matter to bring them all up according to our condition. Our eldest son, as a matter of course, must remain in the world; the other, who is a little stupid and awkward, will do for the Church, and we can look out for a benefice for him. We need not be uneasy about our youngest daughter; she will have suitors enough. The eldest looks rather plain; she will do for a convent. And so they settle the whole affair, and the poor children, thus predestined by their parents before they are grown up and able to judge for themselves, have to agree and to enter in the state pointed out for them by their father or mother, whether they like it or not, whether it is good or bad for them, whether it is their vocation or not. Now, if the children have no liking for that state, and if the parents are unwilling actually to force them to accept it (as I believe is the case with most Christian parents), still the matter can be so managed that the children must pretend to have a liking for it and to choose it freely. For those who are to remain in the world are allowed great liberty and are brought up to vanity; they are allowed to go into society and company, in which their tender minds, like young plants, are easily bent and biassed at pleasure, so that they become quite worldly. Nothing is spoken of in their presence but marriage. If they show the least sign of having an inclination for the religious life, they are at once sent off somewhere, or are kept occupied with all sorts of things that can be of no use to them except in the world. And, what is still more unchristian, temptations and snares are placed in their way, they are brought into dangerous occasions, they are sent to countries from which, as experience teaches, they will bring back nothing but vanity, frivolity, sin, and vice, so that the religious feeling must soon be dulled in them. They are kept away from sermons, so that they may not

hear anything good, and thus become more pious and more inclined to the religious life. In fact, my dear brethren, I know not what to think. It seems to me that an answer, that was once given to a preacher of my acquaintance, must be true. The preacher was complaining to a person that, after having preached on the duties of children for such a long time, they still seemed to have profited but little. Oh, said the other, you must not wonder at that, Father; parents are afraid that their children will become pious, and therefore they keep them from coming to the sermons, although the children would come readily enough if left to themselves. God grant that this may not be the case amongst us! The other children, whom their parents have predestined to the religious life, are treated in a totally different manner: they are kept in solitude at home, so as to hear and see nothing of what passes in the world; they are brought to convents and churches; pious books and pictures are placed in their way; they are continually told of the happiness and contentment of the religious state (and that is really true, as all experience who are called by God to that state). Oh, would to God that all parents brought up their children in that way, but with a purer and better motive, and after having first taken counsel from God, and leaving their children their own choice and free will to follow the divine calling, whatever it may be! In one word, the son or daughter is sometimes flattered, sometimes threatened, until consent is obtained; and if they refuse at first, the parents show such displeasure and dissatisfaction, that at last the innocent children are moved by a sense of shame and filial love to bow down beneath that yoke which is placed on their shoulders, not by the will of God, but by the will of their father and mother, who take no account of God in the matter at all. For, they say, if the vocation is not there yet, it must come by-and-by.

Quite unlike the patriarch Abraham.

No, says Salvianus, with bitter irony, we are not living in the days of Abraham, when the sacrifice of children by the hands of their parents was a rare and prodigious event! Nothing is commoner in the world in our days, than for parents to imitate Abraham: they joyfully sacrifice their children to God; they do not even wait for a command from on high to do so; they do it before God requires it of them; they sacrifice their children although He has not asked for such a sacrifice and will not accept it. But I am wrong, after all, continues Salvianus; these parents are not at all like Abraham; for that holy man was ready to immolate his son, because God told him to do so. They, on the con-

trary, sacrifice their children to God, not according to His counsel, nor for His service; but they force them on Him, so to speak, with violence, in order to satisfy their own avarice, or evil inclinations, or for some other temporal motive. Abraham received exceeding great praise and an eternal reward for his ready obedience. But you, oh, parents, what kind of a reward do you expect for the sacrifice you offer through self-will?

They sin against God and against their children.

What kind of a reward do you expect from God, whose office you thus insolently usurp? "If I be a Father, where is my honor?"[1] Such is His just complaint to the Prophet Malachias. If I am the supreme Father of all souls, where are the honor and respect that are due to me, where is the sign of my paternal authority, if other fathers and mothers try to take it away from me, if I have nothing more to do with those whom I have created, if I cannot appoint for them the state of life which I wish them to enter? Oh, mortals, can you dare to be guilty of such injustice? Who has given you authority and power to do so? I have given you your children in trust, I have lent them to you, that you may keep them according to my will and bring them up; but you constitute yourselves lords and masters over them; you actually turn their free will according to your own plans! Thus I am a Father only in name, while you have all the power. It is in vain that you protest sometimes that your children belong more to Me than to yourselves. If such were really the case you should leave it to Me to select a state of life for them. As the idea takes you, you order one into my service in the religious state, and you keep the other for the world. Who told you that I want the one and not the other? Must I then take what you do not wish to have? The vocation to a particular state is a grace. Who has given you power to distribute it according to your own will? I alone can and will give that grace to whom and when I will. The eternal happiness of your children generally depends on that grace. Where did you get knowledge enough to foresee what state would be best for their souls? This foreknowledge I have reserved to myself. And what sort of thanks do you expect from your children, if the state you force them into should cause the loss of their souls; if your son leads an impious life in the religious state, or an unchristian life in the world; or if your daughter lives a life of discontent and anxiety and despair in the convent, like a poor soul in purgatory? How bitterly they will cry out to Me for vengeance on you, and how they will complain

[1] Si Pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus?—Malach. i. 6.

that they have been brought to eternal death by those from whom they received life, and who should have brought them to eternal life! And know, too, that I will require those souls, which you have stolen from Me, at your hands.

Exhortation to parents.

Christian parents, take this to heart! Leave to their Creator alone the selection of a state for your children! I do not mean that you should give yourselves no trouble about it; that would be indeed a great mistake, and those who are careless of what becomes of their children must answer for their neglect, if they allow the latter to choose the first state that comes into their heads. No! It is your duty to help your children with advice and exhortation, and to assist them to the best of your ability to enter on the state to which God has called them. Your duty is, if your child wishes to undertake anything rashly, to restrain him, until he has thought the matter over. Your duty is, if your child chooses a state in which there are evident dangers of evil, or if his motives are not good, or if he wishes to enter on it by unlawful means, to use your parental authority, and to prevent him, even against his will. The whole lesson that you have to learn from to-day's sermon is this : You must not determine on a state of life for your children without first deliberating maturely and taking counsel with God, and you must frequently exhort your children to do the same.

To children.

And you, oh, children, to whom your vocation is of the greatest importance, remember the advice of the wise Sirach: "Pray to the Most High that he may direct thy way in truth."[1] Think, and think often : What shall I be, a saint in Heaven, or a demon in hell? Oh, certainly I ought not to hesitate. I must and will save my soul, no matter how the world may go with me; I will go to Heaven. Even if I must leave my parents, I will go to Heaven. Even if I must sacrifice all my goods and pleasures, I will go to Heaven. I can do without my parents and friends for all eternity, but I cannot do without Heaven. I can live poor and without sensual joys, but I cannot burn in hell forever! I am resolved, and firmly; I will go to Heaven! Therefore I must not choose a state of life in order to grow rich, nor to enjoy life, but to go to Heaven. Therefore I must and will choose that state which will most surely lead me to Heaven. And what state is that? No other than that to which God calls me. Therefore I must and will obey the voice of God; and, that He may show me what my vocation is, I will pray daily, especially in the

[1] Deprecare Altissimum, ut dirigat in veritate viam tuam.—Eccl. xxxvii. 19.

holy Mass and at holy communion, when I have my God within me, and with humility and childlike confidence: Oh, Lord, Thou enlightenest all men that come into the world! Thou hast said with Thine own infallible Word: "Ask and ye shall receive."[1] Behold, oh, Lord, I earnestly beg of Thee something that nearly concerns Thy honor and my salvation, and which I cannot know without Thy inspiration: Show me the state of life in which Thou wishest me to serve Thee. To that end I will pray every day to the Blessed Mother of God and to my holy angel guardian. I will select a confessor, to whom I will open my heart and whose advice I will follow, as that of one whom God makes use of to declare His will to me. And then I shall at least have, in my future state of life, the consolation, however it may be with me, well or ill, that I did not choose it of myself, nor through the inspirations of flesh and blood, but with the divine counsel and according to the divine will. Then I shall be certain that God will assist me with special helps and graces in all dangers, temptations, difficulties, and anxieties of my state of life. And such is the case, Christian souls; you will then be in that ship which has Jesus Christ as its pilot, and He will guide you to the haven of eternal happiness. Amen.

Another Introduction for the First Sunday after Epiphany:

Text.

Nesciebatis quia in his quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse? —Luke ii. 49.

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

This is the end and object for which all of us mortals are created. For this alone are we in the world, that we may be always about the business of our heavenly Father, that we may serve God, love Him, do His will, and finally be eternally happy with Him. Christian children, I have lately shown you what your duty is to God with regard to that business, and proved that you must, especially in your youth, be pious and zealous in the service of your God. But you will not always remain children and in the years of childhood. A time will come when you must make choice of a permanent state of life, in which it is the will and desire of God that you should serve Him during your lives. Do you think of that? It is a matter that you must early begin

[1] Petite, et accipietis.—John xvi. 24.

to reflect upon seriously and carefully. And certainly you require good advice in it. I will give you the best advice: *It is with God alone that children and parents should often and carefully take counsel in the choice of a state of life.* As I shall show in the first part. *Many parents and children never think of consulting God in this matter, to the great detriment of both.* As I shall prove in the second part, etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction of this Sermon for the Feast of St. John the Baptist:

Text.

Quis putas, puer iste erit ?"—Luke i. 66.
"What an one, think ye, shall this Child be?"

Oh, would that this were oftener asked and reflected upon by those whom it most concerns: "What an one, think ye, shall this Child be ?"[1] What do you think I shall be ? Then would people lead a better and more Christian life, and a greater number of men would save their souls. My dear brethren, I allude to that question and deliberation in which the state of life of children is treated of. Certainly parents often think of it, and ask about it, and so do children; but they often do it wrongly. They ask each other about it, but say nothing to Him who can give them the most certain answer, and whom alone they should consult on this point, and thus it is that both parents and children make shameful mistakes that cause irreparable loss to both; as I shall prove in to-day's sermon. *It is God alone whom parents should often and earnestly ask, What shall my child be?* The first point. *Many parents and children, etc.—continues as before.*

[1] Quis putas, puer iste erit?

TWENTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON REFLECTION IN THE ACTUAL SELECTION OF A STATE OF LIFE.

Subject.

When actually choosing a state, I must consider: 1st. Whether and how the state I am about to select will help me to my last end. 2d. Whether and how that state is in accordance with the divine will.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Vocem meam audient.—John x. 16.
"They shall hear my voice."

Introduction.

To hear the voice of the shepherd, and to follow it, is the mark of a good sheep. To hear the voice of God, and to obey it, is a sign of a chosen child of God. This is particularly the case with you, Christian sons and daughters, who have as yet selected no permanent state of life, and who are still waiting for the voice of God, and deliberating as to what state you will make choice of. What is to be done? How shall I know the voice of God, or whether He calls me to the religious, or secular, or unmarried state? Ah! some say, would that an angel would come to tell me plainly: This or that is the state that you must embrace according to the divine vocation. I would willingly obey. Now, it is not likely that the angel will appear to tell you this, but he will speak to you inwardly, if you only earnestly desire it. And what am I to do? The answer to this question is the subject of to-day's sermon. Be attentive!

Plan of Discourse.

When actually choosing a state, I must consider whether and how the state I am about to select will help me to my last end. How you are to consider that, I will show you in the first part. I must consider whether and how that state is in accordance with the divine will. How you are to find that out, I will show you in the second part. Every one may learn from this how he is to act when in doubt.

Oh, Holy Ghost, enlighten our hearts, in such an important choice, on which our future lives and eternity generally depend,

so that we may not go astray in making it! Mother of Eternal Light and our holy angels guardian, help us herein!

We need not ask if we wish to gain our last end, but we must reflect on the ways and means of doing so.

The universal and only end and object that every man must first propose to himself, is to serve God, to place his soul in safety, and to gain eternal happiness. With regard to this, there is no need of reflection or deliberation, as to whether I wish to gain this end or not; for that must be once for all firmly fixed and determined on: I will serve God, I will save my soul, I will be eternally happy. No matter what my state of life may be, I must and will serve God therein, and save my soul. No matter what it may cost, whether it be hard or easy, I must and will serve God, and save my soul. So that there is no need of my reflecting on that point, and my only consideration must be: What are the ways and means by which I shall best attain that end? In the same way, the doctor, who undertakes to cure a sick man, does not consider whether he wishes to cure him or not, for that is his duty and the object of his skill; his only consideration is, what medicines shall he make use of in order to effect a speedy cure. A general, who is commanded by his king to take a certain fortress, does not ask himself whether he wishes to take it or not, for that is the business he has to do; his thoughts and deliberations regard only the best ways and means to get possession of the fortress: whether he shall take it by storm, or besiege it and starve out the garrison, or get it into his power by a stratagem.

The means to our end is a certain state of life.

The ways and means, my dear brethren, to attain our end, is a certain state of life in which we intend to serve God and save our souls. Now if there were only one state in which we could gain eternal happiness, there would be no further need of deliberation, because every one should then embrace the same state. For instance, a poor man has to go to a certain town; that is the object he has determined on. How, and in what manner is he to make the journey? He need not reflect long on this: he must go on foot, otherwise he will never get there. And why? Because that is the only means of travelling for him; he has no other. He could certainly travel more conveniently on horseback, or in a carriage, but he does not even think of that, because he has no money, and such means of travelling are not within reach of poor people. On the other hand, a rich merchant, who has determined to go to a foreign country, since he has many different means of attaining his object, thinks and deliberates on the way in which he will travel; and, if he acts prudently, he will select that which will bring him to his journey's end with the greatest safety, comfort,

and speed. I might, he thinks, go on foot, but that would be very disagreeable for me, I am so unaccustomed to it. I might go on horseback, but that would be uncomfortable in rainy weather. I can hire a carriage; it will certainly shake me about a bit, but it will protect me from wind and weather, and I can sit down at my ease and bring something to eat with me. So that is settled, I will go in the carriage. In the same way the doctor and general deliberate: the one selects among different medicines, that which will free the patient from his illness with the greatest speed and certainty, and prescribes it; the other holds a council of war to see how he can best get possession of the enemy's fortress, with the least loss of his own men, and having fixed on a plan, he carries it into execution.

Since there are many different states, we must consider which is the best for our salvation.

Now, since there are many different ways in which man can attain his last end; that is, since there are many different states of life, in which he can serve God and save his soul, his first thought and consideration must be directed to finding out the state he intends selecting for that purpose. And since eternal happiness or misery depends on it, he who wishes to act prudently, must look out for a state in which he can best perform that all-important duty of serving God and saving his soul. I can serve God, he must say to himself, in the religious state, and so save my soul; I can serve God and save my soul in a state of celibacy; I can serve God and save my soul in the married state; but which of these three is the least likely to lead me away from the service of God and from the path to Heaven? In which of these three have I the most opportunities of serving God and attending to my soul? In which of the three can I best secure my salvation? From this it follows, that I must not consider what each state is in itself, nor which is the holiest, the most perfect, the easiest, the most difficult, the most agreeable or disagreeable to the senses; but rather, whether, and how far, that holiness, perfection, ease, difficulty, agreeableness, or disagreeableness will help me to my last end; that is, whether that state, no matter what it may be in itself, will certainly help me to serve God better and to make my salvation more secure. Whether the medicine is cheap or costly in itself, sweet or bitter, agreeable or not, makes no matter to the doctor who prescribes it, nor to the sick man who has to take it: the question is whether the medicine, let it be dear or cheap, sweet or bitter, pleasant or disagreeable, has power to restore the sick man thoroughly to health. If I gave to a man suffering from fever, a glass of wine excellent in color, taste, and flavor, the

thirsty man would have a great desire to drink it, but it would increase his fever and make him worse; and if I held in the other hand a glass of bitter, ill-smelling medicine, the very sight of it would make the poor man shudder, but it has the power of cooling down the fever and restoring health. Which do you think ought the sick man to choose? Certainly, if he acted prudently and wished to save his life, he would let the wine alone, and would drink up the glass of medicine, although he dislikes it. And why so? The wine is better and more agreeable. That is true, but the medicine, bitter as it is, is more profitable for him and more able to help him to attain his end—the recovery of his health. The same thing holds good, my dear brethren, in the deliberation and choice of a state of life. Our last end must always be the first thing in our thoughts. Whatever state seems to us best suited to that, is the best and safest for us, and consequently it must be selected by every one who wishes to act prudently and save his soul. That is one point settled.

Then I must see whether that state is the best for me.

Having thus far considered the matter, have I done enough, and can I make my choice at once? For instance, after full deliberation, I find that the religious life in this or that well-ordered convent, is the surest means of serving God and going to Heaven. Must I, then, at once come to a conclusion, without further reflection, and say: I will become a religious? By no means; I have not reflected half enough yet. And what more is there to do? I must see whether the religious life in a convent is better and more helpful for me and for my nature, to the service of God and the salvation of my soul; for, what is good for one man, is often bad for another, although both have the same end in view. There are different states of life, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, just as there are different kinds of food. No matter how good, savory, and agreeable a certain article of diet may be, it will not suit every stomach; what is good for one may be very injurious to another. He who has a weak stomach is more benefited by a glass of good wine and by well-cooked food, than by all the doctor's medicine; while one who suffers from fever would find the good wine and cooking highly injurious to him. "In the same way, the same state of life is not suited for all Christians."[1] These are the words of St. Gregory. So that I must consider myself, my own nature, my qualities and inclinations, in order to see whether the religious life in a convent is suited for me, or not.

[1] Ita nec Christianis omnibus unum idemque vitæ institutum convenit.

And whether I have strength and ability for that state of life.

Besides, I must see whether I have strength enough for that state of life, whether I have talents and ability enough to undergo the duties of it, and do what the rules of the order require. I must see whether I have courage enough to endure its difficulties and trials, and whether I have the means and opportunities of embracing that state which will best lead me to my last end. Such is the warning that Christ gives in the Gospel of St. Luke, by a simile: "Which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?"[1] Many a one looks with admiration at the plan of a building, and has a great desire to possess such a dwelling-house; but to do so he must have money, and generally speaking, more than he is aware of at first. Therefore, if you want to build a house of that kind, you must first calculate the expense of it very carefully, or else you will run into debt or fall into poverty, and be thus obliged to leave the work unfinished, while all who see it will commence to laugh at you; because: "This man began to build and was not able to finish."[2] He who is ignorant of a trade and has never learnt it, must never make a profession of it. The same Evangelist, St. Luke, writes of Peter that, when he saw the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Thabor, "not knowing what he said;"[3] what did he say? "Let us make three tabernacles."[4] How, asks Timothy of Antioch, what are you thinking of, Peter? "Will you attempt to do what you never learned? You have learned only how to make nets, and now you wish to build a tabernacle?"[5] It is certainly a mistake for a man to undertake a duty for which he has neither ability nor knowledge.

Many parents and children err in this way, to the injury of both.

The same may be said of many thoughtless sons and daughters, when they are choosing a state of life; for, the very first idea that comes into their minds, the first opportunity that offers, whether for marriage, or for the religious life, they blindly seize upon, and make up their minds at once, without thinking what sort of a state it is, and whether they can fulfil its duties, or not. Afterwards, when it is too late, they repent of their thoughtless determination, or they suffer from continual discontent, and live in a continual martyrdom, or, if possible, they abandon that

[1] Quis enim ex vobis volens turrim ædificare, non prius sedens computat sumptus, qui necesarii sunt, si habeat ad perficiendum?—Luke xiv. 28.

[2] Quia hic homo cœpit ædificare, et non potuit consummare.—Ibid. 30.

[3] Nesciens, quid diceret.—Luke ix. 33. [4] Faciamus hic tria tabernacula.—Ibid.

[5] Quæ non didicisti facere aggrederis? Retia didicisti contexere nunc autem et tabernacula vis ædificare?

state altogether. They did not know what they were doing. They began the building without reckoning the expense, and they are unable to finish it. They tried to build a tabernacle for themselves without having learnt the art of building. From this, many parents can learn how far more grievously they sin against God and against their children's salvation, when, as we have already seen, they usurp the office of the Almighty, and appoint certain states for their children, a benefice for the son, a convent for one daughter, marriage for another; and thus they predestine their children and spare neither advice nor exhortations, threats nor caresses, until the latter accept this vocation from them and follow it. Nor does it make any matter to them whether their children have the necessary talents or not, for the benefice, the religious life, or the married state. And the consequence of that is, as experience only too often proves, that these children do not live as becomes the ecclesiastical, the religious, or the married state; nay, that they often lose their souls.

Proved by an example.

You have often heard, without doubt, the history of that son, who was talked over by his parents into entering the religious life. After having finished his novitiate and made his profession, he grew melancholy and hopeless, and finally became so reckless as to be intolerable to his Superiors and Brothers. The Superiors could do but little, with all their exhortations and punishments, and they determined to expel him from the convent, since there was no hope of his growing better. His father brought him home, and talked for a long time to him privately, with the intention of inducing him to amend his life. How is this, my son, he said; you were so obedient, pious, and good in the world, and now in the convent you are perverse, reckless, and obstinate? What are you thinking of? The son said not a word in reply. The father continued his exhortations, and meanwhile a little dog came into the room and began to jump about and fawn upon them. The son at once put on his religious habit and began to play with the dog, but as soon as he did so, the dog flew at him angrily and tried to pull the habit off. See, father, said the son, even that dumb beast cannot bear to see me in the dress of religion. He sees that it does not suit me, and therefore tries to pull it off, and as you well know, I can bear it even less than the dog. I have never had either vocation or inclination for the religious state, nor have I had the necessary abilities for it. You have abused my goodness and worried me so long, that through filial reverence and against my will, I entered religion. What do you wish me

to do now? With these words he ran despairingly out of the house. Such must be the case when one selects a state of life, or lets himself be persuaded into selecting it, without considering whether he has the gifts necessary to perform the duties of it. This man began to build and could not finish.[1]

Finally I must see whether that state is appointed for me by God.

Suppose, now, that I know this or that state to be one in which I can more surely attain my last end, serve God, and save my soul; that I have enough strength, gifts, ability, and courage for it, and that I have the means of embracing that state, so that for me and for my nature it would be the means of more surely attaining my last end; can I, then, at last determine and make a final choice? Certainly you have done a great deal, but you have not yet done all. You have still the most important thing to consider, and that is, whether that state of life is the one appointed for you by the will of God. How you are to find that out, I will show in the

Second Part.

The merit of a good work consists not so much in its holiness, as in its conformity with God's will.

The perfection and merit of a good work, or of a pious practice, does not consist so much in the excellence and holiness of the work itself, as in its conformity with the will of God; in this, namely, that God wishes me to do or to omit that work at a certain time, or in a certain place. For instance, it is certainly a far more holy and meritorious work to come to the Church to pray or to hear Mass, than to sit idly at home. Yet, if I am so weak and delicate that the doctor orders me to stay at home, even on Easter Sunday, do I not perform a far more meritorious work and one far more pleasing to God by sitting at home than by going to the Church and hearing even ten Masses? And why? Because at that particular time God wishes me to do the one thing, and not the other. The same holds good for all pious practices. St. Paul the Hermit rendered a pleasing service to God by living alone, fasting, watching, and praying in the desert. If he had spent his time going about the world preaching and converting sinners, which is a far more meritorious work in itself, he would probably not have pleased God so well. On the other hand, the great Apostle St. Paul rendered a most pleasing service to God, by preaching the Gospel to the heathens. If he had lived in the desert he would not have pleased God so well, for he says himself: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not!"[2] Whence

[1] Hic homo cœpit ædificare, et non potuit consummare.

[2] Væ mihi, si non evangelizavero.—I. Cor. ix. 16.

comes this difference? From this alone, that God wished one kind of service from one Paul, and a different kind from the other.

In the same way, my salvation does not consist so much in the holiness and perfection of my state, or in the assurance of salvation which it seems to give me, as in its conformity with the will of God; namely, in this, that God wills me to serve Him in such a state and in no other. Now, it is certain that God does not wish all to serve Him in any or every state, although He earnestly desires the salvation of all; but He has decreed to bring men to Heaven in different ways. Thus, as I said in my last sermon, many are lost in the married state, who would have been saved in religion, and many are lost in religion, who would have been saved in the married state, because God decreed that state, and no other, for them. The reason of this is, that the means of attaining our last end are profitable to us, in so far as they bring us where God wishes us to be; consequently, if God does not wish me to serve Him in this or that state, I cannot find the means of my salvation therein, but rather difficulties and obstacles. Another reason, too, is, that since the divine goodness gives every man, who chooses the state pleasing to God, powerful graces to fulfil the duties of that state, if I enter a state against His will, God is, so to speak, not bound to give me strength to bear a burden that He has not placed on my shoulders. Just as a king is bound to give his general soldiers and money to carry on the war, as long as the latter obeys orders; but if the general went to the war without the king's knowledge and permission, even if he conquered the enemy, the king would not only refuse to give him soldiers and money, but would also deprive him of his favor. You may see from this, my dear brethren, that no matter how holy a state one may select, it is not the best state for him, unless it is in conformity with the will of God.

So our salvation does not consist so much in the perfection of our state as in its conformity with God's will.

Yes, you say, but who will tell me in what state God wishes me to serve Him? Listen; neither I nor any other man can tell you that. In this matter each one must consult the Father of light, who alone knows what His will is in all circumstances; and here we come back to the first point again, namely, that in the deliberation on and choice of a state of life we must consult God, and God alone. If any one asks me, How am I to consult God, so that He will make his will known to me? I will answer in the words of Christ: "Ask, and you shall receive."[1] Ask for light,

How to learn the will of God in this matter.

[1] Petite et accipietis.—John xvi. 24.

and God will certainly give it to you, for He cannot break His word. After having humbly confessed your sins, so that you may be in the state of grace, and capable and worthy of receiving the divine inspirations ("for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins"),[1] pray humbly to your God, whom you have within you during holy communion, not to deprive you of the necessary light on account of your sins, and then place yourself in complete indifference at His disposal, between the three states, suppressing all inclination for one more than for another, with the sincere desire of selecting whichever one of them is most pleasing to Him. Say to Him with childlike confidence: Oh, my God, behold me Thy creature here before Thee, ready to do Thy holy will; my only wish and desire is to serve Thee truly in this mortal life, and in no other way than that in which Thou wishest me to serve Thee. The only object that I am now striving for, is to possess and love Thee forever in Heaven, but I do not desire to go there unless in the way that Thy providence points out to me. What that way is I know not and cannot find out, unless Thou makest it known to me; speak, then, oh, God, to my heart, let me know Thy holy will, for Thou hast said: Ask, and you shall receive. Lead me on the way and to the state in which Thou wishest me to serve Thee.

Other means of knowing the will of God.

Ask the Blessed Virgin also to be your counsellor in this important business, and beg of her to declare to you the will and pleasure of her Son, for she knows more about it than all the other saints. Pray also daily to your holy angel guardian, and ask him to be your faithful guide in this, as well as in every other thing. Offer up all your actions every day, and occasionally a voluntary mortification, that God may give you light and grace to know His holy will and to fulfil it. Above all, avoid every deliberate sin, when about to make your choice, so that you may not close the gate of grace against yourself. Ask advice from your confessor, who knows your conscience. Pray every day during the holy Mass, and often go to confession and holy communion, and make frequent ejaculatory prayers for this intention; sometimes saying with Josaphat: "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee;"[2] sometimes with David: "Oh, Lord, teach me Thy paths;"[3] sometimes with

[1] In malevolam animam non introibit sapientia, nec habitabit in corpore subdito peccatis.—Sap. i. 4.

[2] Cum ignoremus, quid agere debeamus, hoc solum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te.—II. Paralip. xx. 12.

[3] Doce me, Domine, vias tuas!—Ps. xxiv. 4.

the disciples of Christ, when they were in doubt whom to elect in place of the traitor Judas: "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen;"[1] show me which of these three states you wish me to live in; and again with Jesus Christ: "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt."[2] Behold, I have an inclination for that state; if it is the one that Thou hast ordained for my salvation, strengthen me in my resolve and help me to carry it out; but if it is not according to Thy will, then change my inclination and my desires, and let me not embrace that state. If you act thus in earnest for a certain time, you may be certain that God will declare His will to you by an interior inspiration. He will cause you to feel a growing dislike for the state to which your sensuality hitherto most inclined you, or He will not give you the means of entering the state in which He does not wish you to be. In a word, God, who is faithful, and who gives His spirit to men of good will, will not allow you to make a wrong choice, but will surely bring you to that state which He has pre-ordained from all eternity for your salvation, and in which he will shower down all sorts of temporal and eternal blessings on you.

Exhortation to young people to seek the will of God in that way.

This it is, Christian sons and daughters, which you must carefully attend to, if you wish to act prudently in a choice of such importance. Imagine that you are on your death-bed, and about to go into eternity. Do now what you would then wish to have done, in choosing a state of life. Think that you are standing before the judgment seat of Christ, and that He is about to demand an account from you of your choice of a state of life; what answer would you like to make Him? Would it not be a consolation for you to be able to say to Him: Lord, I have done what I could. Thou knowest that I placed myself at Thy disposal long before; Thou knowest that I have often prayed to Thee to tell me what to do and that I entered that state in Thy name, with no other object but to serve Thy divine majesty and to be happy with Thee. If I have erred in my choice, the fault is not mine. See, Christian children, that is what you have to do.

And to be careful not to enter a state against the divine will

Be careful not to act like the majority, who, as we have seen before, rush blindly and thoughtlessly at the first opportunity that offers, or follow their sensual inclinations, to the great danger of their souls. And woe to you, if you act like the disobedient

[1] **Tu Domine, qui corda nosti omnium, ostende, quem elegeris ex his duobus unum.—Acts** i. 24.

[2] Non quod ego volo, sed quod tu.—Mark xiv. 36

and endanger their souls. Example.

Jonas, of whom the Scripture says: "Jonas rose up to flee into Tharsis from the face of the Lord,"[1] and stop your ears against the voice of God, and enter a state of life against His will. How dearly Jonas had to pay for his disobedience! He fell into a deep melancholy, was thrown into the sea, swallowed by a whale, and thus kept for three days and nights in constant fear of death. But how will it be with you? Jonas was at last released out of his prison, but I cannot promise the same fortune to any of you. Take warning by the sad example of the canon of whom St. Anthony relates the following occurrence: A certain young man knew that he was called by God to leave the world and to live in poverty in the Order of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis; but, as often happens, he delayed following his vocation from day to day. Meanwhile he was offered a benefice, and all desire for poverty left him at once; he thought of enjoying riches, for a time at least. But it was not long before the anger of God closed the door of salvation against him, since he refused to enter it when he was called. The new canon thought he would enjoy his dignity for some time, but he was attacked by a severe fever and confined to his bed. In this he recognized the chastising hand of God, and full of melancholy and despair at having lost his vocation, he began to cry out: "Ah, wretched me, who would not hear the voice of God! It is all over with me." The people of the house advised him to send for a priest and to make his confession. "No," he said, "confession is not for me; I am lost; torment me no more; I am lost." Those who were with him thought he was raving and told him to trust in the mercy of God, to kiss the crucifix, and above all, to confess his sins. "What!" said the dying man, "I have already told you, and I tell you again, that I will not confess my sins, I cannot confess! The door of penance is closed against me; I have seen that the Lord is angry with me, and I have heard from His lips the irrevocable sentence: 'I called and you refused;' go now to the torments of hell."[2] Having frequently repeated those words of his sentence to eternal damnation, he gave up his soul into the hands of the devil who was waiting for it. You are horror-stricken, my dear brethren, at hearing of the terrible death of that unhappy man. But you must know that such things are not of rare occurrence in the world; and if God were pleased to reveal their final destiny to all the dying, and these latter made it known to those around them, we should see

[1] Surrexit Jonas, ut fugeret in Tharsis a facie Domini.—Jon. i. 3.
[2] Vocavi et renuisti; ideo vade ad pœnas inferni!—Prov i. 24.

that, as a general rule, an unhappy death is the lot of those who neglect their vocation. Listen to the words of St. Anselm on this head. He says: "I have seen many who put off fulfilling what they promised, and who were surprised by death before they could do that by which they hindered themselves, or that which they promised."[1]

Wholesome advice for those who enter on a state without consulting God, or against His will.

Oh, woe, if such is the case! Alas, what advice can be given, then, to those who entered on their state of life without consulting God, as is the case with a great number of Christians, or who even entered on their state against the divine will, and who can easily see from circumstances that they are not as God wills them to be, although it is now too late to change? Must such people despair of salvation? By no means. I ask the first, have you hitherto led a good and Christian life, according to your state, and lived contentedly and peacefully, although sometimes you have committed faults through human frailty? If such is the case, you may comfort yourselves with the assurance that divine providence has so ordained it and has led you to this state. All the more reason have you therefore to thank the good God for having in His mercy bestowed on you what you should have asked Him for. If you are, on the other hand, discontented in your state of life, and if you do not live therein according to the divine law, then I say to you, as I say also to the second class of people who entered on their state against the divine will: What does a sailor do who is driven away by a contrary wind with all sail set, and who cannot come back? Does he fall into despair? No, he tries to regain by the oars what he lost through the wind. It costs him a good deal of labor, but in the end, and after many difficulties, he arrives in port. Again, a traveller who is in doubt which of two roads to take, and who neglected to ask the way, either through thoughtlessness or obstinacy, loses the right road and wanders about on a by-path. When he finds himself amongst rocks and mountains, far away from his journey's end, does he fall into despair and give up the journey? No, he goes on, up and down hill, tired and weary, until he at length arrives at the right road. In the same way must you act, if you wish to reach the city of eternal happiness, the heavenly Jerusalem. You began your voyage with a contrary wind, when you chose a state of life without vocation; you went astray from the right path, when you neglected to ask advice from God, the true guide.

[1] Plures vidi promittentes et differentes, quos ita mors tulit, ut nec perficerent id, quo se impediebant, nec id exequerentur, quod promittebant.

Others who consulted Him, and followed His voice, are journeying without difficulty on the right road to Heaven. They are sailing towards their port with a fair wind, while you must labor at the oars. Therefore you must work on with all the greater diligence, constantly overcoming and mortifying yourself, redoubling your prayers and good works, so that you may truly repent of your error, replace what was wanting in your vocation, and daily implore the mercy of God, to help you to accomplish your toilsome journey. There is no other advice for you.

Christian sons and daughters, avoid that error in the way I have pointed out to you; let not the ship leave the shore until the wind is fair, until a divine vocation fills the sails. Begin not your journey in doubt, nor before you have asked the true guide, the Holy Ghost, what road will lead you into the promised land, so that you may, without any mistake, reach your last end, and rejoice forever in Heaven with God who called you; a blessing I wish you all from my heart. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Subject.

In the religious state, when one lives according to it, one finds a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth.—*Preached on Septuagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Ite et vos in vineam meam.—Matth. xx. 7.
"Go you also into my vineyard."

Introduction.

The householder of the Gospel, as St. Gregory explains it, is the common Father of Heaven and earth. The vineyard is the true Church in which all men are called to labor during their lives, that when their task is done in the evening, that is, after their death, they may receive an eternal reward in Heaven. Now, as we see in to-day's Gospel that the work is unequally distributed, the first laborers having the longer and more difficult part to perform, the last the shorter and easier; so also God requires

different services from men, according to the different states of life which He has appointed in His Church. He requires one thing from a religious, another from a layman, another from a single man, another from a married man. Each one must work and serve God according to his state, in order to receive a reward in Heaven. Christian children, if you intend choosing a state of life, be specially careful to select that one to which your heavenly Father calls you; as you have heard already. There are three principal states, to which all others may be referred: There is the religious state, the unmarried state and the married state. All these states are holy and are means of gaining Heaven. To whichever of these God calls you, go [1] and work in the vineyard of the Lord according to your state. That you may know something of what you have to select, I shall give you a slight sketch of them, beginning to-day with the religious state. Children, if God calls you to that state, oh, obey the call at the first opportunity! Parents, do not keep your children back; help them as well as you can! Why? Parents, you cannot make your children happier, than by doing so; children, you cannot find greater happiness on earth! As I am about to show.

Plan of Discourse.

In the religious state, when one lives according to it, one finds a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth. Such is the subject of to-day's sermon. You who have not this vocation, be not therefore discontented, but be satisfied with the will of God and the vocation He gives you. Happy would I be if God would make use of my words to give even to one soul the grace of a religious vocation! By the word soul, in this sermon I mean people of either sex.

Do Thou, oh, heavenly Father, effect by Thy grace what is impossible for me; this we ask of Thee through the merits of Mary and through our holy angels guardian. Say, meanwhile, to those whom Thou callest: "Go you also," etc.

According to the opinion of the world, the religious state is not a happy one.

If I wished to speak only of the happiness which a voluptuous world longs for and prizes, I should represent an earthly paradise, in which nothing could be found but comfort, sensual pleasures and enjoyments, great honor and authority, immense treasures and riches, and I should say: This is the religious state to which God calls those whom He has chosen from all eternity. Oh, many a one would think, what happiness to

[1] Ite!

be among souls thus favored by God! And I believe that such souls would find many companions of either sex quite ready to join them in embracing such a state. And yet, if happiness really consisted in those things, then I should be compelled to say to all those who, following the divine vocation, enter a religious order: Oh, how I pity you, poor deluded souls; I cannot congratulate you! What are you going to do? Why are you throwing yourselves away so recklessly? Will you shut yourselves up in a prison, bury yourselves alive, and give up all idea of happiness in the best years of your lives? The treasure that you will find in that state, as you know well, is bitter and hated poverty without any hope of ever possessing the least thing; a constant submission to others, so as to do and avoid whatever they command you, without any freedom of your own, and to this you must bind yourself by the vow of obedience. You will also find perpetual chastity, which will prevent you from enjoying the pleasures of the flesh the rest of your lives; a rigorous solitude, strict silence, frequent vigils, severe fasts and abstinences, continual mortification of the body and the senses. These are the only honors and enjoyments that you will have to expect in that state during your whole lives. Unhappy souls, how I pity you! So, I repeat, should I be obliged to speak. But, away with the false happiness of the world, which is only vain and transitory, and utterly incapable of contenting and satisfying a heart created for better things!

But it resembles the happiness of Heaven.

A far better and real happiness awaits those who are called by God to the religious state, and who live according to its rules. A happiness which blind owls, who measure everything by their senses, cannot appreciate. A happiness that is not derived from creatures, but from the Creator Himself, which has a share in and a likeness to the great happiness of the angels and saints in Heaven, and which, therefore, as I said in the beginning, cannot be equalled by any earthly happiness. For, to come to the matter at once, in what does the happiness of the blessed in Heaven consist? Ask all theologians, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the infallible Word of God itself, and they will all tell you that it consists in three things: in the eternal remembrance and contemplation of God, in the eternal love of God, and in the eternal joy that comes from this contemplation and love. Here you have a sketch of the state to which they are called who receive the grace of a religious vocation. It is a foretaste of Heaven, which they can enjoy in this life; it is a state in which

the soul sees God more clearly and keeps Him more constantly in mind; a state in which the soul loves God with a better and more perfect love; a state in which the soul enjoys a more pleasing, constant and inward happiness, because it constantly thinks of God and loves Him.

It consists in the constant remembrance and knowledge of God.

With regard to the first thing, the constant intercourse with God, walking always in His presence, never leaving Him out of the thoughts, that is an easy matter, nay, almost one of necessity, for every religious. All that is left outside the convent, and all that is found in it, helps and even compels the religious to this with a kind of gentle violence. It is an unusual thing for a layman to think often of God during the day, nor do I wonder at it; for his attention is distracted by a thousand other thoughts, so that it is next to impossible for him to think deeply of God and heavenly things. If God sometimes speaks to him inwardly by inspiration, there comes a swarm of worldly and domestic cares about the children, the servants, clothing, food, and a host of troubles connected with his business, which, like a gloomy cloud, darken the light and take God away from his sight, as the cloud did which hid Jesus from His Apostles in His Ascension. The Holy Scripture says: "And a cloud received Him out of their sight?"[1] But, tell me, of what could a religious think, if not of God and heavenly things? He has by his vows renounced all worldly cares; by chastity, all care for his body; by obedience, all care for his own will; by poverty, all care for money and wealth, so that he can neither lose nor gain by such things, nor can a thief break into his cell and rob him; it is nothing to him whether bread is cheap or dear, where the stuff for his habit is bought, and whether it costs much or little; what he eats or drinks, and a hundred other things of the kind are matters of perfect indifference to him. What can and must he then occupy himself with? It is a difficult thing to think of many things at the same time, and to think of nothing at all is almost impossible for a human being who has the use of reason. Our minds must be always occupied with something, either with God and heavenly things, or with the world and temporal things, or with ourselves and our bodily wants. Now, a good religious, who has made his profession, has no more business to think of the world, or of his own bodily wants, and so it follows as a matter of course, that he is compelled to think of God. Oh, happy necessity, under which the blessed in Heaven are also placed for all eternity!

[1] Et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum.—Acts i. 9.

To which everything in the convent helps.

Again, almost everything that one sees and hears in the bustling world, hinders communion with God; the eyes and ears should be kept constantly closed, if the thoughts are to be always turned to God. On the other hand, almost everything that one sees and hears in a well-ordered convent, helps to the recollection and remembrance of God; the eyes and ears should be kept constantly closed, if one does not wish to think at all of God. The religious habit, the general silence, the rules of the order, the pious pictures that are hung up in all the rooms and corridors, the modesty, zeal, and good example of the brethren, or of the sisters, all these things raise the mind to God. All the duties that are performed according to the daily rule, are only so many occupations performed with God: in choir the praises of God are sung, He is visited in the Blessed Sacrament, He is read about in spiritual books, nay, even during meal times there is spiritual reading; there is constant intercourse with God by frequent confession and communion, by hearing holy Mass, by the daily examen of conscience, and by the prayers that are to be said every day according to rule; all manual and other labor is done for God with a pure intention, and the ordinary occupation of a religious consists of such labor, so that he can say truly, with the Blessed Tauler: "I am surrounded by God on every side." Wherever I turn, I see nothing and find nothing but God. I will not speak of the wonderful lights and inspirations that the good God, who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity by man, and who gives for one service rendered Him a thousand favors and graces worthy of His magnificence, without doubt often and plentifully bestows on the soul which has given itself to Him, and sacrificed for His sake, all that the world could give. Again I say, happy and heavenly state, in which the soul is always united with God, and God with the soul; God being a constant and joyful light for the soul, and the soul, so to speak, an eye to contemplate, think of, and know God, and, as a necessary consequence, a heart also filled with the love of God, which is the second advantage of the religious state.

In the perfect love of God.

Just as our understanding cannot but think of something during our waking moments, so our hearts cannot be without loving something; and as the understanding is always occupied with what the heart loves, so our hearts must most love that on which our thoughts turn oftenest. "Wilt thou know what thou lovest, then see what thou thinkest,"[1] says a holy father. Is

[1] Vis scire, quid ames? attende, quid cogites!

that so? Then I have done enough to prove that the religious state is that in which God is most loved, for I have shown that it is the state in which God is most thought of. I grant that one must love God, even in the world, in every state ordained by God; I acknowledge that there are many zealous servants and friends of God in the world, so that I am covered with confusion sometimes, when I visit such people, especially the poor and afflicted, and see how resigned they are to the divine will, and how peacefully and contentedly they live in the Lord, amidst all their afflictions. But all must agree with me in one thing, that the perfect, true, and constant love of God cannot be near so easy nor so general in a state of life in which, as I have said before, the thoughts are seldom directed to God, because they are filled with worldly cares. How difficult, how rare, how almost impossible it is to love God always and God alone, where a hundred things assail the eyes, ears, and other senses daily to induce them to love something besides God; where a hundred occasions and dangers seduce one into loving things that are against God and His law! It would be a wonder to touch pitch and not be defiled; a wonder to have free intercourse with all creatures and not to have any love for them! In a word, experience shows that, if God is loved in the world, there are a thousand things loved besides God, or not on account of God; the heart is divided, and, by a great injustice, the smallest and worst part of it is generally given to God.

Which is found with the greatest certainty in the religious state.

The pure, undivided love of God, if it can be found anywhere on earth, must surely take up its dwelling in the soul of him who, living of his own accord and through love for God, in a poor cell, away from all dangers and occasions of sin, and to whom the world is dead and forgotten, occupies himself with God alone. If he sometimes thinks of the world and its goods, he looks upon them only as things that he renounced in his profession forever, as things that he would now be prepared to renounce, if he had not done so already, as things that he daily continues to sacrifice to God by renewing his vows, as false and worthless goods which are not worth desiring, much less loving, as contemptible and despicable goods that do not deserve the love of his heart, as dangerous and deceitful goods that are capable of leading him away from God in whom his whole treasure is, and to find whom is his greatest consolation. Under such circumstances, can we believe that the religious can love the world? How is it, so to say, possible for him to love anything against

God? What else can he love but God alone? And since his holy resolution grows stronger every day, and he is determined never to change it, how can he ever cease to love God? Therefore, his is a pure and constant love, by which his human heart possesses God, and God alone; it is an imitation and forerunner of the love which the angels and saints in Heaven have for God.

In the confidence and joy in God, which are not to be found in worldly goods.

What remains now but to show that, as in Heaven the constant love and contemplation of God fill the blessed with unspeakable joy, so also in the religious state on earth, the soul that is always thinking of God and loving Him, enjoys the most peaceful, sweet, and perfect happiness that can be had in this world? Perhaps, my dear brethren, if I had only men of the world here before me, many of them would laugh at me for saying this; to live in poverty, contempt, silence, solitude, watching, fasting, and prayer, and that under a severe rule, and yet to enjoy the greatest happiness, would appear as strange and incredible to them as if I tried to prove to them that black is white, sadness cheerful, pain and suffering exquisite enjoyment. And no wonder! What can a man know of what he has never tried and experienced? But you, souls devoted to God, who have obeyed the voice of God calling you to this happy state, you will certainly experience, and experience more and more every day, how you can have such spiritual consolation and joy in God, that a single drop of it is enough to make you turn away in disgust from all the joys of the world. For the heart rejects all sensual pleasures, looks upon them as worthless, and leaves them to unreasoning animals, and to other men, friends or foes, pious or wicked, it makes no difference; but spiritual joys belong only to the angels and saints in Heaven, and to devout souls on earth, whom God loves especially, and who have an especial love for Him. And such is really the case; in vain do you seek peace, pleasure, and contentment in worldly goods; even Solomon, the most fortunate of men, who possessed these goods in abundance, could not find happiness in them, but, as he says himself, vexation of spirit. On the other hand, in a good religious you would look in vain for anything that would disturb his peace, contentment, and joy, unless perchance you might sometimes find an anxious fear that he does not love God enough. Everything else brings him comfort and consolation; everything that he contemplates in God, in himself, or in the world, if he looks at it reasonably, must only increase his joy.

This joy is experienced

If the religous thinks of God, what a consolation it is to have

in Him a dear Friend, a Saviour, a Father, a Spouse, and one who will repay every service rendered Him! If he thinks of himself, what a consolation to find himself in the house of God, in the vestibule of Heaven (as the holy Fathers call the religious state) amongst the servants of God! What a consolation to think: God has done me the honor, in preference to so many thousands, of selecting me as one of His privileged servants, to be constantly occupied with Him, and to devote myself in a special manner to His service; He has selected me as His spouse, by the vows of religion! What a consolation to think that God has freed me from the many cares and anxieties of the world, and from so many dangers and occasions of sin. He has placed me in this house, as in a place of security, in which it is, humanly speaking, not possible to lose one's soul, unless one does not live according to the rule; in a house in which I have so many brothers or sisters to encourage me by their good example, to instruct me by their good advice, and to help me in the divine service by their prayers, so that I am almost compelled to save my soul; in a house in which Jesus Christ Himself has fixed His dwelling, for He is present in the Most Holy Sacrament, and I can visit Him as often as I will, whenever obedience allows; I can talk with Him, ask Him for advice in doubt, and declare my wants to Him; and that intercourse costs me no more trouble than to take a few steps from my room to the choir; in a house in which I shall find, as long as I live, all that I wish and desire, in which, when I die, death can take nothing away from me, except the life that I have spent in the service of God, and that life will be then changed into a far better one; a house in which no tears will be shed for me except those which flow from joy and charity. What a consolation to hear the testimony of one's own conscience assuring one that he may believe without presumption that he is serving God, as God wishes; that all his works from morning till night, performed in obedience or according to rule, are pleasing to God; that he is on the narrow path to Heaven; that he loves God and is loved by God, and that it is no presumption for him to hope that he will enjoy God forever. Oh, certainly, says St. Bernard, that is a consolation that we do not understand, but let us so live that we may find it.

by the religious who considers God, or himself.

Finally, if the religious thinks of the world, and of what takes place therein, what consolation it is for him to consider: the world may do as it likes, I have nothing to hope and nothing to fear from it. Misfortunes and accidents in business, adversity

Who considers the world.

and poverty in the household, ill-health, sickness, and death of children, parents, or friends, and other countless miseries and trials which nearly all men have to undergo, and all have to fear and provide against, these miseries, which so embitter life, are nothing to me; I need not even bestow a thought on them, much less fear them. I can sit down peacefully, like a bird in its nest, and sing a joyful hymn to my Lord and my God, by whose Fatherly hand I am fed, and allow Him to dispose of me as He pleases. Oh, what greater happiness can there be? What consolation and satisfaction to know that one need not seek to please men, and need live so as to please Christ alone, not caring for anything else! To know that there is no further need of parents or friends, or of people of high or low condition, that no favor or service is required of any one, and that the whole world is trampled under foot, so that it can be of neither use nor harm! What man of the world can boast of such a quiet and contented life? Bring here all your joys and pleasures; I am sure that not one good religious would change with you, even if it were lawful to do so.

This joy not disturbed by anything.

Now, is there anything that can disturb the joy and peace of such a state? Perhaps the subjection and chastisement of the body, and the self-denial and mortification required by the religious state. Alas, how far men go astray who think that! says St. Augustine. The very mortifications, the tears and sufferings of pious souls, are a thousand times sweeter, than all the pleasures of worldly societies and banquets. These are what they seek, and their joy is to be able to suffer and to die with their suffering Spouse. In spite of all these things, a wonderful pleasure, joy, and perfect contentment can be seen in their looks, words, and whole behavior. I must cry out with St. Bernard: "Oh, religious state, you are certainly the dwelling place of God," in which He is so well known and loved, in which He is possessed with so much joy! "Oh, religious state, life of happiness, life of angels! Truly, my brethren, the convent is a paradise,"[1] a state of heavenly happiness upon earth.

Conclusion for young people deliberating on a state of life.

My good God, what do I not owe Thee for having called me, in preference to so many others, to this state, and, as Thou knowest, for having drawn me to it, as it were, by the hair of the head! Woe to me if I do not acknowledge that benefit, and serve Thee according to my vocation, with the greatest zeal! Yet, that concerns myself alone. Happy souls, who will one day

[1] O religio habitaculum Dei! O religio, vita beata, vita angelorum! Vere claustrum fratres mei, est paradisus!

have the grace of being called to this state, when that day comes, I would wish to say to you, in the words of the Archangel Raphael to Tobias' family, after he had declared to them that he was the guide who accompanied the younger Tobias on his journey: "Bless ye the God of Heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you."[1] Ah, if you should have a desire or longing for this state, do not repress it; look upon it as a scout sent out to see how your heart is towards God, and whether He can speak still further to it, without any fear of His voice being neglected. But, reflect on the matter seriously; for, as I have often told you, they alone who are called by God to that state, and who desire to live always according to its rules, enjoy the happiness that I have described. I know well that a few discontented souls find their purgatory, nay, even an eternal hell in the convent, because they did not take counsel with God in the matter, in the beginning; and hence, too, they who serve God in the unmarried state, according to their vocation, are far happier than such people. Still, to guard against this, there is the novitiate and the year of probation. Once again, I say to you, think well of the matter; first with God, by earnest, humble prayer, as I said in my last sermon; then with a pious confessor who knows your soul; and finally with your parents, who are not to be passed over if they seem not to be opposed to your vocation. At least, all of you may learn from this that you are not to expect to find a paradise of happiness in the married state alone, as is generally the opinion among young people, who look upon the first feeling of love they experience as a vocation, and rush blindly into marriage, on the first favorable opportunity. Of course, such people pay little attention to the call of God. So that we may apply here the terrible words of to-day's Gospel: "Many are called, but few are chosen."[2] Many are called by God to the religious state, but few are chosen for it, because they think they will find some wonderful degree of happiness in some other state, and some fearful misery in the religious state, and so they reject the call of God.

Moral lesson for the other hearers.

But what is this to us? So, my dear brethren, will many of you doubtless say, who are in another state of life; are we here to-day only to admire the happiness of others, of which we cannot bring any portion home with us? Would to God, my dear

[1] Benedicite Deum cœli, et coram omnibus viventibus confitemini ei, quia fecit vobiscum misericordiam suam.—Tob. xii. 6.

[2] Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xxii. 14.

Christians, that the knowledge of the real happiness of the religious state, excited a sort of holy envy in you, and made the false happiness of the world disgusting to you! It would be profit enough for our souls if we could free our hearts from worldly desires! Still, no matter who you are, you can and must have a share in the real happiness too. God calls all men to true happiness and to their eternal salvation, though not in the same way. Meanwhile, whatever state we are in, our principal business is to know God, to love Him, and to rejoice in Him. If your duties and occupations do not allow you to think of God constantly, at least do not forget Him. Think of Him often during the day by renewing your good intention, by which you offer up all your ordinary acts to His honor and glory. If you cannot have a constant, perfect love of God, at least love Him so constantly as never to offend Him by a deliberate mortal sin, for the sake of money, pleasure, or other creatures. If you do not feel that inward consolation and joy of the heart in God, give Him at least the consolation of knowing that you will bear patiently, through love of Him, your daily trials, difficulties, and cares. The more dangers threaten your soul in your state of life, the more careful must you be in avoiding occasions of evil, to which no evident necessity compels you. If your state of life fills you with many cares and labors about yourself, your children, and the decent maintenance of your family, at least let your greatest care be the business of your salvation, so that you may keep yourself and those under your care in the grace of God, and that you and they may attain eternal happiness. Think often: what good is everything in the world to me, if I do not go to Heaven? No, I seriously intend to save my soul. I will employ my best energies to that effect. If such is our real intention, we may now conclude, and we may all together think and say, with joy and consolation: I have chosen a happy state of life, in which God wishes me to work as in His vineyard, and for that work, if I perform it for God's sake, I shall receive my reward just as the others, when evening comes: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire;"[1] and that reward will be the eternal contemplation of God, the eternal love of God, and eternal joy in and with God in the kingdom of Heaven! Amen.

[1] Voca operarios et redde illis mercedem.—Matth. xx. 8.

***Another** Introduction for the same Sermon on the Occasion of a Religious Reception or Profession:*

Text.

Hodie salus domui huic facta est.—Luke xix. 9.
"This day is salvation come to this house."

Great salvation! wonderful good fortune for Zacheus that he was made worthy to receive Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, into his house, and to entertain Him as a guest! Why was this privilege conferred on him in preference to so many others? A multitude of people were standing around Christ, but He looked only on Zacheus, and went only to his house. The origin of this salvation, of this happiness was, that Zacheus separated himself from the people, and ascended the tree in order to see Jesus better and to know more about Him. In that position he was seen and called by our Lord. He heard the voice of the Lord and descended immediately, followed by Him, and received Him into his house. If he had remained hidden in the crowd, he would not have had that happiness, in all probability. Devout souls! and I am speaking principally to those who are now prepared to make their vows to God before this altar, or to receive the habit of religion, you are those who, in order the better to see and possess Jesus, have separated yourselves from the tumult of the world and aspired to a state of higher perfection. It is on you, in preference to so many thousand others, that Jesus has cast an eye of favor. He has called you to Himself, that he may constantly dwell with you in this holy house. I have no doubt that, if we could look into your hearts, we should find them filled with a greater joy, than if the whole world were given to you, just as it happened to Zacheus, when he received Christ: "He received Him with joy."[1] And in truth, you have reason for this joy, for I can assure you, in the words of Christ Himself: "This day is salvation come to this house,"[2] that is, to your souls. It is a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth; as I shall show you in to-day's sermon of congratulation, to your consolation, and to the encouragement of others. I repeat then: *To-day you have chosen a state of happiness greater than any other on earth.* Such will be my subject. That we may understand this great grace, and be always thankful for it, we beg of Thee, oh, Lord, to grant us Thy light, through the intercession, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Excepit illum gaudens.—Luke xix. 6. [2] Hodie huic domui salus facta est.

Another Conclusion for New Religious. Follows Note 11.

I congratulate you, then, anew, pious souls, whom God now calls to this Heaven! Go on courageously and finish the sacrifice that God requires of you. Let me, in conclusion, repeat for you the words of the Archangel Raphael: "Bless the Lord of Heaven and confess to Him in the sight of all who live, because He has shown you His mercy this day."[1] During your whole lives, never lose sight of the day on which Jesus first cast His eye on you, and inspired you with your holy purpose; that day on which you first set foot in this holy house; that day on which you first put on the holy habit of religion; that day, finally, on which you made your vows to God in your profession. These four days must be real feast days for you, on which you must remember, and say with gratitude: This is the anniversary of the day of my salvation.[2]

TWENTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE GREAT GRACE OF A VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Subject.

The vocation to the religious state, when it is faithfully accepted, is a certain pledge, a sure sign of future happiness in the kingdom of God.—*Preached on Sexagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Vobis datum est nosse mysterium regni Dei.—Luke viii. 10.
"To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God."

Introduction.

To you, my disciples, who have left the little you had for my sake; to you, who still follow Me, is given, in preference to other men, something special—a special light, knowledge, grace, and hope of the kingdom of God. Thus said Christ to His apostles. To you it is given,[3] I can also say, in His name, to all of you who

[1] Benedicite Deum cœli, et coram omnibus viventibus confitemini ei, quia fecit vobiscum misericordiam suam.

[2] Hodie huic domui salus facta est. [3] Vobis datum est.

are called by God to the religious state, and who obey the call. To you also a special grace is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to have, even in this life, a foretaste of the happiness that awaits you in that kingdom; as I proved in my last sermon. But how? you ask. Can we have Heaven twice—here in this life, and in eternity also? No, that cannot be. The word of God, by the Apostle St. Paul says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."[1] All must travel by the rough and difficult way of the Cross in order to get there. That is true, my dear brethren. But if, in the midst of these tribulations, crosses, and sufferings, God can give to the souls that love Him such sweet consolation that Heaven is opened to them, as is also true, then I must say, yes, a religious who lives according to his rule in a well-ordered convent, has two heavens: one in this life, by the constant contemplation, love, and enjoyment of God, as I showed before; and another in eternity, which according to the divine promises, must necessarily follow the first; as I shall now prove for the greater enlightenment of those who are actually called, as well as of those who are to be called by God to the religious state.

Plan of Discourse.

The vocation to the religious state, when it is faithfully accepted, is a certain pledge, a sure sign of future happiness in the kingdom of God. Such is the subject. Parents, rejoice if that great happiness is given to your children. Children, do not reject this grace, if God offers it to you! Such will be the conclusion.

To this end, grant us Thy light, oh God, through the intercession of Mary and our holy angels guardian.

The grace of religious vocation contains all the signs of eternal grace.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is really the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will certainly see God. Blessed are those who mourn and weep for their own sins and the sins of others, for they will be comforted for all eternity. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they are children of God, who will attain eternal peace. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after piety and justice, for they shall be filled eternally. Blessed are they who hear the Word and the voice of God, and keep it, for they belong to the elect of the fold of Christ. Blessed are they who suffer much for the honor of God and for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. All these words pro-

[1] Per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei.—Acts xiv. 21.

ceed from the infallible lips of Christ, whose words and promises cannot fail or deceive. Yet, I have not said half enough, for I have undertaken to show that the religious vocation is a sign of salvation. I should have mentioned one circumstance of that over-happy state, which includes every sign of eternal salvation. For where, as a general rule, does one live with a purer heart and conscience, than in religious solitude? St. Bernard calls it: "A holy, pure, and immaculate state, in which one lives more purely, falls more seldom, repents more quickly, and advances more cautiously."[1] To commit a deliberate mortal sin; my God! what a terrible monster that would be for a soul devoted to Thee! The very thought and idea of it makes one tremble. A perfect poverty, freely chosen for the love of God and Heaven alone, a complete subjection of the spirit, a constant sighing and weeping, that is, a continued repentance even for trifling daily faults, an imperturbable peace, love, and unity with each other, a keen hunger and thirst to increase in piety, to know and to fulfil every indication of God's will, and to please Him more and more every day, an unalterable contentment with the divine arrangements, patience and joy in suffering and adversity, and still more—where could all these things be found, if not amongst religious who live according to their vocation and the rules of their order? Even one who would be accused of tepidity, in the convent, might be set before many in the world as a model of virtue. Truly, the religious life in a well-ordered convent is an epitome of all the signs of eternal salvation. Therefore St. Ephraim and Theodoretus call it a harbor and sure port of everlasting life.[2] But I do not want all this to prove my subject.

The life of a religious is looked upon as martyrdom, as far as its mortifications are concerned.

One thing alone, that the holy Fathers say, is more than enough for me, for they compare it to martyrdom. He who dies as a true martyr for the faith, or for some other virtue, is so certain of his salvation that it is not allowed to pray for him. Now, the religious life is a martyrdom, and, as St. Athanasius says, a far more difficult and daily martyrdom of body and soul, to keep the faith and one's conscience pure.[3] Almost everything that martyrs have to suffer, and almost everything that they have to console them, the religious has to suffer and to enjoy. See now if that is the case. As far as the sufferings of the martyrs of Christ are concerned, they have four things to undergo: they are de-

[1] Sancta, pura et immaculata, in quo homo vivit purius, cadit rarius, surgit velocius, incedit cautius.—Theodoretus.

[2] Religio portus quidam est publicus salutis.

[3] Quotidianum fidei ac conscientiæ martyrium.

prived of all their temporal wealth, they are dragged away from house and home and from all their friends, even the nearest and dearest, their bodies are tortured in various ways, and finally they are deprived of life. There you have a sketch of the seeming cruelty with which the love of God treats a religious. In the first place, what is the vow of poverty, but an innocent thief, who, as St. Serapion said long ago of his book of the Gospels, robs him at once of all his property and leaves him only enough to buy a small room, as his prison during life, and a grave after death. And not only does it take away everything from him that he really possessed, but it does what no other thief could do, and deprives him of everything that he could inherit, and leaves him no hope of ever possessing anything. Again, the religious is driven out of house and home into poverty, he is torn away from all he loved on earth, from all who loved him in the world, from friends and acquaintances, from brothers and sisters, from father and mother, and that forever. If he is occasionally allowed to see one of them, which, however, he must not desire to do, as far as in him lies, he is then like St. Alexius, who lived concealed as a poor stranger, under the steps of his father's house; he can see his parents for a short time, but he has no longer a mere natural love of flesh and blood for them, for his love is now supernatural and directed to God alone. Again; to watch while others are sleeping, to fast and abstain when others are eating and drinking, to treat the body as an enemy, with the greatest severity, always to resist sensuality, to renounce all the comforts and delights of the flesh, to desire and seek for nothing but crosses and sufferings with his crucified Redeemer, is not that a protracted martyrdom, by which the body is tortured? The mere inclination and desire of even an innocent pleasure is enough to make him reject that pleasure altogether through love for God; the bare dislike and disinclination for a thing is enough to make him accept it even against his will. The holy Abbot Paphnutius once fell into the hands of a cruel tyrant, who threatened him with all sorts of tortures to make him deny the faith; but the pious old man began to laugh, and said to him: Is that all you can do? Have you no other torments for me? If not, I must laugh at you, for you must know that the life of a religious, such as I have led for sixty years, has far more numerous and severe torments than these; yet they have not been able to frighten me away from my God and my faith, and neither will the tortures with which you threaten me.

As far as death is concerned.

Finally, the principal and most necessary part of martyrdom is death. In the same way the principal and most necessary part of the religious state is death. The religious can truly say with St. Paul: "For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh."[1] And what is, in reality, the religious profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience, if not a kind of death by which a man dies to all the wealth, honors, and joys of the world, and to himself and his own freedom, by which, too, he buries himself between the four walls of his cell, so as not to live henceforth for any creature, but for Jesus Christ, whom he has selected as his Spouse? Therefore there is a great difference between a temporal and a spiritual marriage. When the eldest daughter of a family is married, how great is the pleasure, joy, and exultation of all! If another daughter espouses God by the religious profession, her father, mother, and other relatives cannot, as a general rule, refrain from weeping; the spiritual bride alone has joy and consolation in her heart, and tears of happiness in her eyes. And whence comes that difference? Is not your eldest daughter as dear to you, oh, parents, as the younger one? Will not her husband bring her to a strange house, and often to a foreign land, away from you? Why then do you laugh at her marriage and weep at that of the other? It is natural to do so, for the first is brought away to live in the usual way of the world, while the second is led away to death, and once she enters the convent, she is looked upon as dead and lost. A dead body feels nothing, sees and hears nothing; it allows itself to be turned and twisted and thrown away at pleasure; place it in a splendid bed, be most attentive to it; or throw it on a heap of straw, or on the bare earth, and it will not feel one more than the other, for it is devoid of life. In the same way the spiritual bride is affected, according to the rule of her order, by the world and its empty vanities: she has lost eyes, ears, memory, understanding, and feeling for such things. No matter what happens in the world, whether men laugh or weep, live or die, she does not concern herself in the least, she hears and sees nothing of all that. It is a matter of indifference to her whether the world hates or loves her, honors or despises her, for she does not belong to the world, nor does the world belong to her. She is virtually dead, and lives only for God, she allows herself to be turned and twisted and used in any way that obedience requires.

[1] Semper nos, qui vivimus, in mortem tradimur propter Jesum, ut et vita Jesu manifestetur in carne nostra mortali.—II. Cor. iv. 11.

It is a very difficult martyrdom both of soul and body.

I have said already, with St. Athanasius, that the religious state is a more difficult martyrdom, for martyrs offer up their lives but once ; they can suffer only one death : a lance thrust through the heart, a rope round the neck, a blow of a sword, drowning by water or burning by fire, and it is all over, there is no more dying. Many martyrs survived their torments, but no one was ever known to arise from the dead and offer himself again to the torturer. But a true religious must offer up his life a thousand times to the same death ; as long as it pleases God, he must live so as to die every day, and daily to offer himself as a holocaust. If the torturers used violence towards the bodies of the martyrs, they could not touch their souls, nor torture them ; nay, they rather placed them at liberty by freeing them from the prison of the body. But the religious state does not leave even the soul without torture; it tortures the body by poverty and chastity, and leaves the soul no freedom, for it binds it in a long servitude by the vow of obedience. "Obedience," says St. Bernard, "is a noble martyrdom; it cuts off the head of one's own will,"[1] and places it at the feet of another's will. If martyrs have to suffer a painful death, they do not at least kill themselves ; they await death from the cruelty of a tyrant or executioner. But a religious must, so to say, be his own tyrant, his own executioner. He must seize hold of himself, accuse and condemn himself, and execute his own sentence on himself. The martyrs in the midst of their torments could almost grasp their eternal crown, for the end of their sufferings was not far off. But in the austerities of the religious life, the crown of eternal life is seen only at a distance ; it must be striven for, and suffered for, and no one knows how long.

Which the religious chooses and willingly undergoes.

Christian sons and daughters, what think you of all this? What do your hearts say to you? Does it not seem as if I described the religious state in such vivid colors, with the intention of frightening you away from it, and of depriving you of all inclination and courage for it, instead of urging and exhorting you to it? Oh, no ; such is not my intention ; but I must tell you candidly what that state is in itself, so that each one who feels that he is called to it by God, may know what he has to choose. Still, for one who is really determined to follow the call of God, I am not afraid that he will be in the least frightened. Conceal as well as you can, from wretches condemned to death, the instruments of torture that await them, for such people are poor sinners who meet a violent death unwillingly. But in the case of one who, in-

[1] Obedientia nobile genus martyrii, decollat propriæ voluntatis caput.

flamed by the love of God, desires nothing but to resemble his poor, humble, and suffering Saviour, and to be crucified with Him, you must place openly before his eyes the thorns, nails, cross, and other instruments of torture, and not only will the sight of them not cool his zeal, but it will even encourage him; instead of becoming troubled and afraid, he will find therein his greatest consolation and joy, for he will find what he seeks and desires. If I wished to persuade a merchant to undertake a journey to Brazil or to India, Peru or Japan, I must tell him of the great treasures and riches that are to be found there; but if I had to deal with a servant of God, a zealous missionary, I should bring forward far different motives to urge him. Then to induce him to go I should represent the difficulties and dangers of the toilsome journey, the trials, tribulations, persecutions, chains and imprisonment, torture, fire and sword, that await him there, to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And that would be the right way to urge him, for his heart would at once bound with joy and desire. This is the reason why, up to the present day, so many hundred religious have gone to those countries and sacrificed all the comforts of Europe to live amongst savages. In the same way I know what a soul wants that is determined to follow the divine vocation: the greatest austerities cannot frighten one away, because it is not a comfortable, easy, and pleasant life that is sought by him who intends to enter religion. Otherwise it would be better for him not to do so. To suffer for God, to deny and mortify one's self, to get to Heaven by the rough and narrow way of the cross, that is the object of his desires. The more there is of the cross, the greater the desire for it in a soul that loves God, in order to give proof of his love and fidelity for his heavenly Spouse. It is a special grace and happiness for one who is selected by God for such a high state, in which a great deal more may be done for God.

And meanwhile the religious has his consolation and joy like the martyrs.

Meanwhile, they who receive that grace, experience that the religious life, which has its share of the torments of the martyrs, has also its share of their unspeakable consolations and joys. We sometimes shudder with horror when we think of how terribly some of them were slowly tortured to death; but if we could have beheld them in their sufferings and asked what they thought, then should we see even tender youths and young children rush to the torture with as much joy as if they were going to a marriage feast; we should see them, like St. Ignatius, exciting the lions and wild beasts to attack them more fiercely; or with St. Law-

rence, laughing on the glowing gridiron, as if they had lost all feeling. We should hear them say that they find it more difficult to bear the great consolation and inward joy they experience, than the torments inflicted on them. Oh, how sweet it is, writes that great servant of God, Father Charles Spinola, of the Society of Jesus, from Japan, a short time before he was burned to death over a slow fire; how sweet it is merely to think of my happiness! To know that I am to die for my Saviour! What joy it will be for me when I am actually in the midst of the flames! For the thought of being burnt alive is a sweet one for me!

In the same way, they who love the vain world, who are inexperienced in the path of virtue, and who have never found out how sweet the Lord is, have a fearful idea of the religious life when they hear of its austerities, and imagine all sorts of things about it. How great a mistake they make! Look at religious themselves and ask them about it, and they will not be able to conceal their contentment, and their inward joy and peace, if they are good religious. Nor do I wonder at it; that glorious, generous, and merciful God, who can make the sufferings of the martyrs sweet to them, who even grants pleasures to sinners, His sworn enemies, can He not also fill with exquisite sweetness far surpassing all worldly delights, the hearts of His dearest children, who, through love of Him, have left all the pleasures and joys of earth, and who care for nothing but to love Him properly and to do something to please Him? Certainly, He can do so! But if He can do it, He will do it, for He will never allow His creatures to surpass Him in generosity; He will never permit those who most eagerly desire to love and serve Him, to be without consolation and joy, for His goodness impels Him to make all reasoning creatures happy. In the beautiful words of St. Bernard: "Men of the world see our sufferings and austerities; but they do not see our consolations,"[1] because these latter are in the depths of our hearts; if they could see them and experience them only for an hour, they would feel, not pity, but rather a holy envy of our state of life. The words of the Psalmist are literally true: "Better is one day in Thy courts, above thousands."[2] Better and more pleasant is one day in Thy house, oh, Lord, amongst the children devoted to Thee, than a thousand years in the tumult and false happiness of the world!

In the same way, a true religious finds joy in austerities.

Let religious themselves speak, and say what sweetness they

Without once com-

[1] Cruces nostras vident, unctiones nostras non vident.

[2] Melior est dies una in atriis tuis super millia.—Ps. lxxxiii. 11.

plaining of them, as worldly people do.

have hitherto tasted in God. Consider them, and ask them, I say again, how it is with them. With a modest humility, but with cheerful, joyful countenances, they will answer: Thanks be to God, it is well with me; I am contented; I could not desire anything better. I would not change my happiness with that of an emperor or a queen! Now go into the world, amongst those who seem to have the greater share of worldly happiness—how differently they will speak of themselves, even before they are asked to do so. If intimate friends are speaking about their trials and difficulties, how one laments and mourns the losses he has suffered, another complains of his children, a third of his family; one requires this, another that. Many are ashamed to complain openly, but their long faces and smothered sighs give you clearly enough to understand that they have a secret pain and anguish gnawing at the heart. Show me one like that amongst true religious, even in the strictest orders. I know well that now and then you can find a discontented person in religion, who is always complaining; but why? Because such a one is either forced to become a religious, or he has not been called by God, or he is an imperfect, sensual, and tepid religious. What wonder is it that God withdraws His sweetness from those who are untrue to, and do not fully observe the promise they made, according to the rules of their order? Or there may be sometimes some who are tempted by the devil, and have no experienced guide to give them advice. Besides that, there is a great difference between one order and another, nay, even between one convent and another. I am speaking of good religious in well-ordered convents; visit them, and visit them a hundred times, and see whether you will find anything amongst them but a rare contentment, a wonderful inward and outward cheerfulness. None of them will say, although he may have spent twenty, thirty, forty years, and more in the convent, that he is tired of it; many of them will complain, as I myself lately heard one complain, that they have too much happiness and contentment, and that they are afraid on that account lest they should not get to Heaven; so that they must be comforted by being reminded of the hundredfold that Christ has promised them, even during this life. A certain sign, oh, Lord, of Thy favor and generosity, by which Thou knowest how to inundate with sweet joys, even in the midst of trials, Thy servants and handmaids, who seek nothing but Thy cross! But they perhaps conceal their holy sorrow, and hide it under an assumed cheerfulness? What would be the

good of such a disguise? And how could they keep it up long, without sometimes making known their griefs to their friends or parents who visit them? I should look upon such a disguise, kept up even for a short time, as a greater wonder than to feel excessive joy in the midst of martyrdom. No, oh Lord, I must say it again, it is an undeniable proof that Thy burden is really light, and Thy yoke sweet; since Thou art always "a God of all consolation,"[1] to Thy children who love Thee!

Therefore the religious vocation is a certain sign of salvation through the divine promise.

There is no doubt, then, that the religious state is a martyrdom, in its austerities, as well as in its consolations; consequently, it must be a sure sign of eternal salvation. What reasoning do we require? Thy promise, oh, most faithful God, cannot fail. Thou hast clearly spoken and made us this promise by Thy Evangelist, St. Matthew: "Amen, I say to you. . . . .Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake:"—each one, whoever he may be; what reward will he have? Praise be to Thee, oh, Lord!—"he shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."[2] And therefore, in some orders, when the religious, making his vows, says the words: I promise[3] to God Almighty, perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience; the Superior who receives the profession, answers: "And I, in the name of God, promise thee eternal life."[4]

Hence they are fortunate who are called to that state and live according to it.

Oh, certainly, then, they are more than fortunate who are called to that state by God, and who live according to it! What happiness thus to have a foretaste of heavenly joys by the complete contentment felt in God! And what happiness and consolation at the end of this life, when all labor and trouble is at an end, to enter into eternity with a pledge of salvation in the hand, and to be able to say to God with full confidence: "I have done, oh Lord, what Thou hast ordered; give me now what Thou hast promised."[5] For Thy name's sake I have left house and home, father and mother, sisters and brothers, and everything in the world; I have received the hundred-fold already, now I expect eternal life from Thee. Oh, what happiness and consolation, I repeat, to die with that certainty; while on the other hand, the man of the world, who sought happiness in vain and transitory goods and in earthly pleasures, must leave all in the world and

[1] Deus totius consolationis.

[2] Amen dico vobis: . . . .Omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros propter nomen meum: centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit.—Matth. xix. 28, 29.

[3] Promitto. [4] Et ego tibi promitto vitam æternam.

[5] Feci, quod jussisti; redde, quod promisisti!

depart into eternity empty-handed. In the year 1656, as Aldrovandus writes, there were seen in Hungary two young men in the air, apparently fighting with each other. One of them was heard to say in a plaintive voice: "Alas, my kingdom is at an end,"[1] while the other cried out in tones of exultation: "My kingdom is about to commence."[2] A striking image, my dear brethren, of two brothers or sisters, one of whom enjoys the luxuries and sinful pleasures of the world, while the other leaves all, to serve God alone in the religious state. Both must die, but how different their deaths! The luxurious worldling who enjoyed all pleasures without restraint, must now exclaim full of sorrow: "Alas, my kingdom is at an end." All joys are done for me, and where am I going to now? But the servant of God, who despised all earthly things, and disregards what death can deprive him of, will cry out: "My kingdom is about to commence!" Through love of my Saviour I have preferred to be poor, rejected, and despised; now my sufferings are at an end; He is calling me to His kingdom: I will now begin to reign[2] with Him in Heaven, and no one will be able to take my reward from me. I will reign[2] and of my kingdom there will be no end. Ah, my dear brethren, who would not wish to die a death like this?

Exhortation to parents.

Think well on this, you, especially, Christian parents! For God's sake do not be troubled nor disturbed, as is often the case, if one of your children, even the dearest, or the only one, is called by God to that high state. Rejoice, rather, that you can give and sacrifice your child to God, and thus insure his temporal and eternal happiness. Rejoice that you can place your child where he can best pray for his own salvation and yours. Learn from the beautiful example of that father, of whom our Father Cæsar Calini writes in his book called the "Young Joseph": There was in Italy, in the year 1715, a nobleman, whose eldest son disclosed to him (as a good child ought), in several letters, the fact that God had called him to the religious state. The nobleman sent an answer to his son, of which the following is a short extract: "My dear son: I did not determine to give my consent to your request at once, because I thought it necessary to prove your resolution, and to know what moved you to it. But now, since your letters prove it, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus Christ, and give my hearty consent to your request, and, in the name of God, I bestow on you my fatherly blessing. You have received a great and special grace from the divine mercy. I heartily rejoice that

[1] Regnavi. [2] Regnabo!

nothing in the world can become your master, and that you have so soon heard the divine inspirations that so lovingly call you to the religious state. Oh, what a grace for you, that God selects you in preference to so many others, for His service! I know that you are leaving a noble house, but I am certain that if you had to abandon a throne, you would do so, fully persuaded that it is better to serve God than to reign, and far more preferable to live despised and unknown in His house, than to enjoy the false happiness and honors of the world. Eternal thanks be to the Almighty, that you are not one of those children who contend against the providence of God, and who embrace a state of life from other motives, without consulting Him. Therefore, hasten to enter that holy state, to which nothing but the pure love of God has called you, and in which, if you perform your duty properly, you will certainly save your soul. Go on, then, my son! Do not allow any earthly thing to come between you and your God! It is my duty to remind you of this, it is yours to fulfil it. Forget me, and all belonging to you; God will think little of our sacrifice, if I do not give you up altogether, and if you do not abandon yourself to Him completely. This is my desire, and I beg of you to ask of God daily, that you may know and fulfil His will. Obtain for me, by your prayers, that I may labor for the end for which I was created, and by a virtuous life, may attain eternal happiness. Rest in peace, my son. I resign you into the loving hands of your heavenly Father. Although the separation costs me many tears, yet I shed them on account of the unspeakable joy I feel in seeing that you are chosen by the Holy Ghost for such great happiness. Therefore, my son, take leave of me and all belonging to you, for the last time. God bless you! 'Bless the Lord, live joyfully; and because thou hast heard the voice of thy God, all blessings shall come upon thee.'"[1] Such was that father's answer. Which plainly proves that he was influenced, not by flesh and blood, nor by the false maxims of the vain world, but by the Spirit of God. Christian parents, what think you of this? Have you the same dispositions? Oh, if all fathers and mothers were thus well-disposed towards God and the salvation of their children, how many sons and daughters would be called to that happy state by the voice of God?

To children about choosing a state.

But you, oh, children, to whom that great grace is offered by an interior inspiration from God, rejoice in the Lord with all

[1] Benedic Dominum: age dies lætitiæ, et quia audisti vocem Dei tui, venient super te universæ benedictiones

your hearts, and do not reject the proffered grace, or incur the danger of losing temporal as well as eternal happiness. Be careful, especially when you are deliberating about a state of life, not to make yourselves unworthy of such a grace, by imitating the vanities of the world, by associating with persons of the opposite sex, or by consenting to grievous sin; and do not allow that grace to be taken away from you through want of opportunity to correspond with it; but prepare your hearts by the practice of virtue, and chiefly of Christian humility and modesty, that you may all the better hear and obey the call of God. You are bound to honor father and mother, and to show them the most humble love and obedience; that is true; but if your parents, knowing that you are called to the religious life, and after you have declared your holy purpose to them, and when you have the opportunity of carrying it into effect, they not requiring your help for their support, if they, in any way, try to hinder you, then obedience to them would not be obedience to God, and with all childlike respect you must absolutely refuse to do what they ask of you. If they use caresses or threats to prevent you, stop your ears and do not let yourself depart a hair's breadth from your intention. Remember how David acted when he went to fight the giant Goliath. How many reasons were brought forward to deter him from his purpose! One of his brothers accused him of putting forward this as a pretext for leaving home and gratifying his curiosity by seeing what was going on in the camp: "I know thy pride and the wickedness of thy heart, that thou art come down to see the battle."[1] When he presented himself to Saul, and said: "I thy servant will go, and will fight against the Philistine,"[2] he was laughed at, for he appeared too young and weak: "Thou art not able to withstand this Philistine, nor to fight against him, for thou art but a boy,"[3] said Saul. Nevertheless David repeated: "I will go."[4] And so he went against the giant, with his staff in his hand, trusting in God, in whose name he attacked Goliath, slew him and returned victorious. Christian sons and daughters, in the same way your friends and acquaintances, your brothers and sisters, your fathers and mothers may perhaps try to keep you from entering religion. They will say to you: "I know well your pride and wickedness, etc."[5] I know well what you want: it is only a plan

[1] Ego novi superbiam tuam, et nequitiam cordis tui, quia ut videres prœlium descendisti. —I. Kings xvii. 28.

[2] Ego servus tuus vadam, et pugnabo adversus Philistæum.—Ibid. 32.

[3] Non vales resistere Philistæo, nec pugnare adversus eum, quia puer es.—Ibid. 33.

[4] Ego vadam. [5] Novi superbiam tuam, et nequitiam etc.

of yours to escape the obedience you owe your parents, it is a wicked scheme to enjoy an independent life. You have no vocation, but only curiosity to see what is going on in the convent. Sometimes they will express pity for your youth! What are you thinking of? You are only a child; you have not strength enough for such a life, etc.[1] Sometimes they will try to frighten you with the difficulties and trials of the religious life; but do not mind their empty talk, say boldly: I will go.[2] God calls me, I will go.[2] He who places the burden on my shoulders will also give me strength to bear it. My mind is made up; I will go[2] and follow the call of God. Even if your parents and the whole family are filled with sorrow, and beg of you on their knees, and with tears in their eyes, to remain with them, pay no attention to them; remind them of the words of our Lord in the Gospel: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, ... he cannot be my disciple."[3] St. Gregory remarks on this passage that a child should no more allow his father or mother to keep him away from the service of God, than if he hated them. Yea, adds St. Jerome, if your father and mother were to place themselves across the threshold of the door, so that you could not leave the house to follow the call of God, without stepping on them, then you must do so.[4] Hesitate not, step out boldly and follow the voice of God to the standard of the cross, for His holy will must be preferred to the authority of your father or mother.

To those who have already resolved to enter religion.

Finally, you who, knowing the will of God, have really determined to enter religion, think and say with joy, what Samuel said to the High Priest: Thou hast called me, oh, Lord, behold me![5] I know whereto and wherefore Thou callest me to a state of humility, poverty, crosses, and mortification. But that is the very state that I willingly embrace, in order to become more like to my poor, humble, crucified Redeemer. I desire no other reward but thee, oh, God; no other treasure but Thee; no consolation or happiness but in Thee alone! If the hundredfold reward promised in this life should fail, yet Thy word cannot fail; therefore I desire nothing more than to possess Thee, oh, God of my heart, according to Thy assurance, in eternal life. Amen.

[1] Non vales resistere, quia puer est. [2] Ego vadam.

[3] Si quis venit ad me, et non odit patrem suum et matrem .... et fratres et sorores ... non potest esse meus discipulus.—Luke xiv. 26.

[4] Per calcatum vade patrem, per calcatum perge matrem, ad crucis signis evola!

[5] Ecce ego, quia vocasti me.—I. Kings iii. 6.

Another Introduction for the same Sermon on the Occasion of a Religious Reception or Profession:

Text.

Hodie salus domui huic facta est.—Luke xix. 9.
"This day is salvation come to this house."

How! did such good fortune fall to the lot of Zacheus because he quickly obeyed the call of the Lord? Because he restored unjustly acquired property? Because he gave the half of his goods to the poor? If so, may I not ask, oh, Lord, what good fortune, what happiness will be the lot of those two, who are now before Thy altar? They have obeyed Thy call as quickly as Zacheus. Not only have they given away half their goods, but all they had, or could have in the world, for Thy sake; not only have they given their goods, but themselves also, body and soul, to Thy service, and that forever, by the vows of religion which they are about to make. Hear what the Lord Himself answers in the Gospel of St. Matthew, when Peter asked Him a similar question: "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee; what, therefore, shall we have?"[1] "Amen, I say to you," answers Christ, "....every one that hath left house, or father, or mother,.... or brethren, or sisters.... for my name's sake; shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting."[2] Have you understood me, pious souls? Be glad and rejoice, for the Lord God makes the same promise to you to-day. Oh, what a happy day for you! To-day, you will be assured of your eternal salvation, as far as we can be sure of any future event; as I shall prove with many arguments, to your consolation, and by way of congratulating you. The religious profession, which you are about to make, is a sure pledge and certain sign of eternal salvation. There you have the whole subject; for I repeat and will prove: "This day is salvation come to this house," etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Conclusion for New Religious. Follows Note 10.

There is nothing more for me to do now, than to congratulate you, pious souls, with my whole heart, on the holy resolution that you have to-day carried into effect. Your sisters in religion unite with me in this; your parents and friends who are present, in

[1] Ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te; quid ergo erit nobis?—Matth. xix. 27.
[2] Amen dico vobis:.... Omnis, qui reliquerit domum ... centuplum accipiet et vitam æternam possidebit.—Ibid. 28, 29.

order to resign forever into the hands of God the natural rights they have had over you hitherto, also congratulate you. Meanwhile, you, whom I may call predestined to Heaven, go up courageously to the altar to take the last step and complete your union with your heavenly Spouse, by those vows which you have long desired to make. Both of you may say with joy, like Samuel: Thou, oh Lord, hast called me, behold, here I am [1] to answer Thee. Thou wishest me to embrace a state of poverty, chastity, obedience, mortification, crosses, and sufferings; I accept it with my whole heart, nay, it is the very thing I desire. If that state were less poor, less humble, less austere, it could not so well satisfy the love and desire that draw me to it, in order to become more like my poor, humble, crucified Redeemer. I shall say with Joab, when Banaias, at the order of King Solomon, tried to entice him to leave the temple by saying: "Come forth," [2] and Joab answered: I will not come forth, but here I will die.[3] Let the world do what it will, let it try every means to entice me back again, let it say: "Come forth" a thousand times, and promise me a pleasant life, I shall answer: "I will not come forth, but here I will die." If my parents and relations tried to drag me away from the altar, and said to me: "Come forth," come back to us, beloved daughter, we will give you a rich inheritance. With you "I will not come forth; but here I will die." Even if the wicked spirit himself, with all his legion, were to whisper into my ear, "Come forth;" you will not be able to bear the austerities of the order; what you are doing is useless, you will be lost in spite of it: I will not come forth, I will die here, shall be my final resolution. Away with you! I here promise and vow to Thee, oh, God, before Heaven and earth, perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience. I desire no other reward but Thee, oh, God, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Ecce ego quia vocasti me. [2] Egredere!
[3] Non egrediar, sed hic moriar.—III. Kings ii. 30.

TWENTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE UNMARRIED STATE.

Subject.

One of the most excellent and happiest states is the unmarried state; therefore, they who are called to it, should readily obey the voice of God.—*Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servies.—Matth. iv. 10. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Introduction.

These words are for each and every one of us; therefore we are in the world. In this is our last end, to this all our thoughts, words, and actions must tend; namely, to adore the great God, and serve Him alone. Now, my dear brethren, as we have seen recently, although God wishes to be adored and served by all men, yet not by all in the same manner, nor in the same state of life; for each one must serve Him in that state to which he is called. In the last two sermons I have treated of the excellence of the religious state, and the happiness of those who, being called to it, live according to its rules. To-day I will speak of those who live in the world in the unmarried state, to which, due proportion being observed, the secular clergy also belong. So that those children who are still deliberating about a state of life, may know something about this, and see what they have to choose by the vocation and inspiration of God. I say therefore

Plan of Discourse.

One of the most excellent and happiest states is the unmarried state; therefore, they who are called to it should readily obey the voice of God and serve Him alone. Such is the subject to-day.

Do Thou, oh, Lord, enlighten the understandings and arouse the wills of all those whom Thou callest to serve Thee in this state; we ask this of Thee through the merits of Thy Virgin Mother Mary, and the intercession of the holy angels, who serve Thee in Heaven.

Not all unmarried

By the words "unmarried people," I do not understand all

those who, being still free, have entered neither the religious nor the married state; otherwise I should include the greater number of people, namely, all young people not arrived at maturity, all widowers and widows, who are actually unmarried. Nor do I include those who wish to marry, but have as yet had no fit opportunity of so doing, on account of poverty, ill-health, weakness, and other hindrances, and who, therefore, have to remain unmarried against their will. These latter must remember that divine providence has so arranged matters for their greater good, and for the salvation of their souls, and that this is the state, and no other, in which God wishes them to serve Him, although they do not choose it by their free will; therefore, as many others have to do on different occasions, they must make a virtue of necessity, and, content with the divine will, they must humbly and earnestly beg of God to protect them from all the dangers and occasions of sin, and they may be certain that He will not abandon them, but will always guard them by His grace. Finally, I must also exclude those who, like weather-cocks, take a liking sometimes to one state, and sometimes to another, without ever coming to any determination, and wait blindly for the first acceptable opportunity that may present itself. All these people are certainly unmarried, but they are not in the unmarried state, which is a state fixed for life, and to which all, of both sexes, belong, who, according to the advice of the Apostle, have once for all made the resolution of not marrying, nor of entering a religious order, and of remaining as they are to the end of their lives, and that, too, with a proper motive and object.

People belong to the unmarried state.

I say with a proper motive and object; for, to remain unmarried merely to escape the burdens, trials, cares, and annoyances of the married life, and meanwhile to live without restraint, to frequent the company of the opposite sex, to go often into society of all kinds, and to give way to sensual pleasures, which marriage alone can render lawful, and to do so without restraint whenever opportunity offers; that is no vocation from God, but an evident snare and treachery of the foul fiend, and it is a state in which countless sins are certainly committed against holy purity, a virtue that it is, humanly speaking, impossible to preserve among so many dangers and opportunities. It would be better for such people to get married, and they are bound in conscience either to do so, or to amend their lives. Oh, how many there are of this class, who deceive the world by a false appearance of

Nor those who remain unmarried without a good motive.

chastity, and who make use of the glorious title of virginal purity as a cloak to conceal their abominations and impurities from the eyes of the world! Outwardly they are white as doves, but inwardly they are as black as ravens that feed on stolen offal. A raven of this kind was that girl who, being attacked by two wild boars in a forest, through which a holy religious, Bernard Astensis, was travelling, called out to the holy man for help; the latter ran up at once, but saw that he could not assist her. Alas, cried the girl, I have led a bad and immoral life. In order to indulge my passions more unrestrainedly, I refused all offers of marriage, under pretext of preserving my virginity until death. Now I am lost forever, and these wild boars are in reality devils to whom I am delivered for punishment. Woe to all of you, then, of either sex, who thus deceive the world! You will not escape the eye of God; the day will come when all your hidden abominations will be brought to light, and made known before Heaven and earth, by that Judge who, according to St. Paul, "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."[1]

Who then belong to that state?

I allude, therefore, only to those unmarried people who, for a supernatural end, that is, for the love of God, that they may serve Him better, attend more carefully to their salvation, and be thus more certain of going to Heaven, voluntarily renounce the lawful joys and pleasures of the married life, either by a firm resolution, or, what is still more meritorious and certain, by a vow of perpetual chastity and virginity, and who thus live unmarried, in virginal modesty and humility, rejecting, as far as possible, all society with persons of the opposite sex, and avoiding every occasion that might excite to sensuality. Such is the unmarried state in which one serves God, and God alone.

This is one of the happiest states. How the holy Fathers praise it.

I must exclaim with the Wise Man: "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men."[2] Oh, how glorious, noble, and happy is the state of those servants and handmaids of God, as long as they live according to it! Here I may mention some of the eulogies pronounced on it by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. St. Cyprian calls it: "The nobler part of the fold of Christ,"[3] which, on account of its unsullied purity, and greater likeness to Him, is more dear to Him.

[1] Qui et illuminabit abscondita tenebrarum, et manifestabit consilia cordium.—I. Cor. iv. 5.

[2] O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate; immortalis est enim memoria illius, quoniam et apud Deum nota est, et apud homines. —Sap. iv. 1.

[3] Illustrior portio gregis Christi.

The holy Martyr Ignatius, who lived just after the time of the Apostles, places this state, as to dignity, in the same rank as anointed priests; for he writes thus to the Christians of Tharsis: "Honor those who live in virginity, as you honor the priests of Christ."[1] They are really children of Jesus Christ, says St. Ambrose, for Christ is the Father and the Source of true virginity; because, when it was unknown and despised in the world, He chose to be born of a Virgin, in order to bring it from Heaven down on earth and to introduce it there. "Earthly angels of Jesus Christ," so they are called by St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and many others, according to the words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew, when he speaks of the glorified bodies of the elect: "In the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in Heaven."[2] Nay, more than that, St. Bernard, following St. John Chrysostom, does not hesitate to place them, to a certain extent, above the angels. He says: "There is indeed a difference between a chaste man and an angel, but it is a difference of happiness, not of virtue."[3] It is natural for the angels to be chaste, because they have no carnal desires; but for a man with a mortal body to observe chastity, in the midst of dangers, temptations, and natural evil inclinations, is, indeed, a great virtue. The angels are chaste without difficulty; men, on the other hand, must combat and often do themselves violence, and therefore their chastity is more to be wondered at than that of the angels. They are the most intimate servants of Jesus Christ, who stand round His throne, and sing to Him that canticle which no others can sing, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "And no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."[4] Oh, certainly a sublime and happy state!

Virgins in the unmarried state are spouses of Christ; what a great happiness!

But, my dear brethren, no matter how highly all those eulogies extol the unmarried state, they are all surpassed by one title of honor, which is, that that state is one of spiritual marriage with Jesus Christ, who is the Lover and true Spouse of chaste

[1] Eas, quæ in virginitate degunt, in pretio habete, velut Christi sacerdotes.

[2] In resurrectione neque nubent, neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angeli Dei in cœlo.—Matt. xxii. 30.

[3] Differunt quidem inter se homo pudicus et angelus, sed felicitate non virtute

[4] Et nemo poterat dicere canticum, nisi illa centum quadragintaquatuor millia, qui empti sunt de terra. Hi sunt, qui cum mulieribus non sunt coinquinati; virgines enim sunt. Hi sequuntur Agnum, quocunque ierit.—Apoc. xiv. 3, 4.

souls. "Rejoice," says St. Augustine, "virgins consecrated to God;"—words that may be also applied to all who are resolved to preserve their virginal purity intact till death—"what honor and happiness for you! You have, as your Bridegroom, Him whom the most pure Queen of Virgins alone merited to have as her Son. Although He does not honor you as He does His Mother, yet He loves you"—as long as you remain true to Him—"as His spouses." Could any one have a greater happiness or dignity in this mortal life? We sometimes hear people say, when a rich man marries a poor maiden: How fortunate that person is! If a peasant girl is desired in marriage by a king, on account of her beauty, how the world wonders! How can the poor maiden behave in accordance with her newly-acquired dignity? For she is now raised above her former position, she is seated on a throne, and is honored as the first lady of the land. Rejoice, ye souls consecrated to God! It is to One incomparably greater than any king on earth, that you are espoused, by the promise and observance of perpetual chastity! In the holy state of matrimony on earth, no matter how happy it is, he who is called to it by God receives only a mortal woman as his bride, even if she is a queen; and, although he may be an emperor, yet he is only a mortal man. Your Bridegroom, who is espoused to you, is the greatest of men, and is true God as well.

Shown by an example.

St. Ambrose tells of a noble maiden, whom her parents tried to force, against her will, into a marriage which the world would call a happy one. When she could no longer resist their violence, she ran to the church, clasped the altar in both arms, and said to her parents, who followed her: What do you want from me? What is it that you desire? That I should marry? Very well; be it so; but you must give me a bridegroom who is pleasing to me; otherwise I will not accept him. You must know that I desire one who has not his equal in nobility in all the world; I desire one who surpasses all others in knowledge and ability; one whose magnificence excels that of all men; whose treasures and riches are so great that I might buy the whole world with them; one who is the most beautiful of all, whose beauty never fades; one who will give me all kinds of joys and pleasures, without the least annoyance; one who will love me always, and who will certainly be always true to me; one who, in addition to all these things, can never die. Father, mother, can you find a bridegroom of that kind for me? If you can, I will obey you, and will give him my hand at once. But if he is wanting in a single one of

these qualities, then I do not care for him, I will not have him; you must not trouble me about him. You should rather rejoice and congratulate me; for see, I have already found the Bridegroom whom I desire: Jesus Christ, the Son of the King of glory, who is here really present on the altar. To Him I now vow, in your presence, perpetual chastity, and I take you as witnesses of my vow. At last I have what I so much longed for and desired.

They have the great King of Heaven and earth as their Spouse.

The very same thing, my dear brethren, may be said, to their great joy and consolation, by all those who serve their God in perpetual chastity, in the unmarried state. Away with all who can love me in the world! Away with all whom I could love in the world! I have chosen another Lover and Spouse, who has said to me by the Prophet Osee: "And I will betroth thee to me forever."[1] A Spouse who has none like Him in Heaven, and much less on earth, in nobility, wisdom, power, riches, beauty, happiness, love, and fidelity, and He is that Lord who not only descends from all the Jewish kings, and is the successor and heir of David and Solomon, but He is also the Son of an Eternal Father, the substantial image of all the divine perfections, the Son of God, equal to God, God Himself; and hence, too, the Creator of all things, the Lord and Judge, on the hem of whose garment is written, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"[2] at the bare mention of whose name, the angels bow down in Heaven, crowned heads bow down on earth, and even the devils in hell tremble. He is the Lord, from whose eye the dark night can conceal nothing; without whose will and permission not a hair falls from my head, not a leaf from a tree, not a flake of snow or a drop of water out of the air. He is that Lord whose might and power are irresistible; who makes laws for kings and emperors; who calms the sea with a word, and places bounds to it that it cannot pass; who calls to the stars and they answer, "Here we are,"[3] what is Thy wish? Who has a thousand times a thousand about Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand to wait on Him. He is that Lord, whose riches are inexhaustible; from whose hands all goods and treasures come; who is never in need of any creature; who, although He is most generous to all, yet has much for Himself and is none the poorer. He is that Lord before whose glory and beauty the sun and moon hide themselves for shame; who, even in a mortal body, could be called: "Beautiful in form

[1] Sponsabo te mihi in sempiternum.—Osee ii. 19.
[2] Rex regum, et Dominus dominantium.—Apoc. xix. 16.
[3] Adsumus!

above the sons of men;"[1] whose beauty is not dimmed by age; whose countenance is the eternal joy of the elect in Heaven. He is the Lord who loves me with the tenderest love, when and as long as I wish; whose tenderness for me is not lessened by the most loathsome illness, who will never be untrue to me if I do not first banish Him violently from my heart. He is the Lord of death itself; death can never take Him from me; in and with Him I may expect eternal joys. Such is the Bridegroom that I have chosen, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. I ask again, is it possible for any mortal in this life to attain to greater happiness and dignity?

They will have eternal joy in this Spouse in the next life.

But, some will think, it is, after all, an unenviable happiness. Such a rich, noble, and loving Spouse ought to bring something to the soul who thus chooses Him. What marriage gift does He bring? His bride ought certainly to share in His riches. But if she has nothing of her own, nor from her parents, she will certainly not grow richer by remaining in the unmarried state. Experience teaches that many such people barely manage to live. Instead of such a bride living with her Bridegroom in joy and pleasure, all means of sensual pleasures, such as she could lawfully enjoy in the married state, are cut off from her, and hopelessly too. Is not that a miserable kind of happiness? Yes, truly it is so, if we must judge of it by the senses alone; but Christ has said before now, when He was urging His disciples to perfection: "Not all understand this word."[2] Our Bridegroom, they can answer, has said of Himself: "I am not of this world."[3] So also the treasures and riches, the joys and pleasures, the honor and happiness we expect from Him, "are not of this world;"[4] although they are given to us already a hundredfold in this life by the inward peace of heart and conscience, and by the merits and treasures that we can amass for our souls in our state of life. Our real happiness is on high, where our Bridegroom holds His royal court.

And also even in this life.

Meanwhile, if all carnal pleasures are forbidden to us forever, that is what we desire; because we can thus keep our hearts more free from creatures and can more easily give them altogether to God and to divine things, as St. Paul says, when praising the unmarried state: "The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord."[5] While others, who are bound by matrimony, are in servitude, and

[1] Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum.—Ps. xliv. 3.
[2] Non omnes capiunt verbum hoc.
[3] Ego non sum de hoc mundo.- John viii. 23.
[4] Non sunt de hoc mundo.
[5] Virgo cogitat quæ Domini sunt.—I. Cor. vii. 34.

have all sorts of cares and troubles, the virgin lives in freedom, and beyond the trouble of supporting herself decently, she has no other care, no other thought except to serve God in peace, and attend to the salvation of her soul. While others must adorn themselves to please the eye of a mortal man, we have time to adorn our souls with virtues, so as to please the God of all beauty alone. While others, if their marriage is in the least degree unfortunate, are tormented by a hundred different trials, and lament too late the loss of their freedom, we have nothing of the kind to fear. Others, even if they have everything they wish, lose their bridegroom by death, and are left in sorrow, and often in poverty with their children: we need never fear that, for our Bridegroom can never be taken from us. Others, again, are separated from their bridegroom and from all they love, by death: we, when the hour of death comes, shall be eternally united to ours; that is what we expect and long for. Oh, what a glorious and happy state is that of the chaste servants and handmaids of God![1] Well hast thou written, oh, holy Apostle St. Paul, in thy Epistle to the Corinthians: "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I."[2] "Therefore, both he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better."[3] "Every one hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that."[4] One is called by God to one state, and another to a different state. Let each one only lead a pious and Christian life, in the exact fulfilment of the duties of the state to which he is called.

Folly of those who lose their purity in their youth.

Here I must condemn the reckless conduct of those boys and girls who throw away in their youth the treasure of their chastity —which is so precious in the sight of God, and so dear to Jesus Christ—at the first opportunity that offers, and even after having deliberately sought out an opportunity of satisfying their beastly passions. Nay, they even rejoice and look upon it as a piece of good luck when they have a chance of losing this noble treasure, which once lost, can never be recovered for all eternity. Foolish virgins! Unhappy souls! How I pity you! For you allow yourselves to be deceived by the flattering tongue and false words

[1] O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate.

[2] Dico autem non nuptis et viduis: bonum est illis, si sic permaneant, sicut et ego.—I. Cor. vii. 8.

[3] Igitur et qui matrimonio jungit virginem suam, bene facit, et qui non jungit melius facit. —Ibid. 38.

[4] Sed unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo, alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.—Ibid. 7.

of some bird of prey, who after he has deprived you of your best treasure, goes his way, and leaves you dishonored in the sight of God, and often in the sight of men too! The world still wonders at the foolish gluttony of Queen Cleopatra, who, in order to say that she had eaten something costly, caused a pearl worth two hundred thousand crowns to be dissolved in vinegar, and swallowed it. Agrippina, that she might induce her spendthrift son, Nero, to amend his ways (after he had once given eight hundred thousand Roman crowns to a man who pleased him and who had no other merit), caused vast sums of money to be heaped together, and showed them to her son. Look, my son, she said, at the trifle that you gave away yesterday! Christian youths and maidens! Your foolish extravagance is much more to be wondered at, or, to speak better, much more to be deplored. If it were possible to lay before you the treasure that you squander in a few moments, when you lose your virginal purity, you would see that it is not like Cleopatra's pearl, or Nero's treasure, but that it surpasses all the wealth of the world; for, to preserve it, many saints have shed every drop of blood in their veins with pleasure, while you so foolishly sacrifice it for a short-lived gratification.

Examples to prove the great treasures they lose.

If you wish to know how you should prize your virginity, ask that young man Nicætas, of whom St. Jerome writes, that being tied hand and foot, and delivered over to the insults of a shameless woman, and having no means of defending himself, he bit off his tongue and spat it with his blood into her face. Ask that heroic virgin who, according to Cardinal de Vitriaco, plucked out her eyes with her own hands and sent them to one who was plotting against her chastity. Another, in similar circumstances, cut off her lips and nose, so that being thus deformed, she might be in no danger of being loved by any one and thus losing her virginal purity. Still more wonderful is what we read in the lives of the Saints, of the holy virgin Euphrasia: Through hatred of the Christian faith, she was given over to a soldier to be dishonored. All her prayers and tears were of no avail, when suddenly she thought of a plan, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; throwing herself down at the soldier's feet, she said: If you spare me, I will teach you an art that will be worth more than money to you, for it will make you completely invulnerable in war, and you may first try the success of the art on me. The soldier was delighted to hear this, and promised to be her protector if what she said turned out true. Euphrasia, secretly rejoicing, made a pretence of culling different herbs here and there, as if

they contained some wonderful power; she then pressed the juice out of them between two stones, applied it to her neck in the soldier's presence, and kneeling down, said to him: Now you can see whether my art is good or not; draw your sword and strike as hard as you can; I assure you that my neck will not be in the least injured. The soldier, suspecting nothing, drew his sword and struck so hard that her head fell off at one blow. It was what the courageous virgin wished for by her pious stratagem, for she thus preserved her virginal purity intact. What think you of this, sensual and thoughtless young people? You who so lightly squander away such a precious treasure! What do they think of it, who are not content with what God has given them, but try to please others and gain their love by painting their faces and curling their hair, and by immodesty in dress also?

The wickedness of those who betray the innocent.

And you, wicked agents of the devil (oh, I could go mad when I think of it), you traitors and defilers of youth, who by your immodest language and stories, wicked teaching, provocation, caresses, invitations and conversation, betray so many innocent souls to impurity! Should you not be afraid when you think that you have taken away from God that precious treasure, not only in yourselves, but in others also, and that you have given it over to the devil! What shameless audacity it would be to insult or dishonor a queen in the very presence of the king! But you are far more shameless and insolent, for you dare to do that to one who, as long as she is pure, is espoused to Jesus Christ, the King of kings: and you do it before the God who sees all things. Woe to you, if that jealous Bridegroom, who cannot even allow His spouses to bring Him a divided affection, has to judge you for your sins after your death!

Conclusion and exhortation to the unmarried.

Finally, I speak again to you, Christian sons and daughters, whom God has called to the unmarried state. Acknowledge thankfully and humbly your great happiness, which the Lord has given to you in preference to so many others; but be careful to serve Him according to your state. You have kept your freedom, not to live more freely, but to be able all the better to attend to the salvation of your soul. You have given up all idea of marriage and sensual love, and you have thereby received Jesus Christ as your Bridegroom; He will henceforth take possession of your hearts and keep them for Himself alone. You are free from many domestic cares, therefore direct all your thoughts and desires to God and heavenly things. You have either vowed, or promised for God's sake, perpetual chastity; see that you keep

your resolution in the midst of the dangers and temptations of the world, and to that end, and that you may be always faithful to your Bridegroom, you must lead careful, retired, modest, and humble lives. If you are determined to do so, then I congratulate you; resolve and say with the Spouse of the Canticles: "I found Him whom my soul loveth, I held Him, and I will not let Him go."[1] Wretched pleasures of sense, good-bye forever! I have found in the Author of all happiness a consolation which enlivens my soul. To Thee alone, oh, God, do I belong; Thee alone I must and will adore and serve; Thee alone will I love with my whole heart; for Thee alone will I live and die, that I may be Thine in eternity. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DANGERS AND GRACES OF THE UNMARRIED STATE.

Subject.

1st. The unmarried state is full of dangers and temptations. 2d. It is also full of graces and helps.—*Preached on the second Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.—Matt. xvii. 4.
"Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Introduction.

Yes! I quite believe that it is good to be here, as Peter said, when he saw our Lord in snow-white garments, and had a foretaste of his future glory in Heaven. But while Christ was speaking with Moses and Elias about His future passion and death, Peter and the other two disciples, terrified at hearing the voice of the Heavenly Father saying: "Hear ye Him,"[2] and imitate Him, fell on their faces, sore afraid. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have described the happiness of the religious and the unmarried states: and some of you might say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here;"[3] let us build tabernacles in the unmarried state. Yes, that is true; and would that all who are called by God to that

[1] Inveni, quem diligit anima mea; tenui eum, nec dimittam.—Cant. iii. 4.
[2] Ipsum audite!—Matt. xvii. 5. [3] Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.

state, so understood it! But there is one thing that they must not forget, lest, like Peter, a too late repentance may fill them with dread. Each state has its own joys, which attract us to it, but each one has also its difficulties and trials, which might frighten one away. And such is especially the case with the unmarried state, the happiness of which I described in my last sermon. I do not say this, Christian sons and daughters, to give you a dislike to that state; God forbid! With St. Paul, I rather advise you to embrace it, for it is good for you to remain as you are. My intention is simply to tell you what this state is in itself, and to show you how you may remain in it constantly. I say then—

Plan of Discourse.

1st. The unmarried state is full of dangers and temptations. The first part. But be not afraid, for—2d. It is also full of graces and helps. The second part. And if you use those graces and helps, you can fearlessly and confidently say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."[1] *This subject will be found useful to all, no matter what state they are in, as we shall see in the course of the sermon.*

To this end, oh, Holy Ghost, we beg Thy help and inspiration, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy angels guardian.

All men suffer temptations and dangers.

These are the well-known words of the Prophet Job, and daily experience proves their truth: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare,"[2] in which we have to contend with all kinds of enemies, and in which we are always surrounded by hundreds of dangers and temptations, through which we must bring our souls unharmed. This holds good for all, whatever may be their state, age, and sex. The pious, who really wish to serve God faithfully, are warned by the Wise Sirach, to be always prepared and ready for combat: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation,"[3] which will certainly not be long in coming. This I say for all the pious and just servants and handmaids of God, of whatever age or condition they may be.

But it seems to me that it is true of none more than of you, Christian sons and daughters, who are espoused to Jesus Christ, in the state of perpetual chastity. For, the more precious the

[1] Domine, bonum est nos hic esse. [2] Militia est vita hominis super terram.—Job vii. 1.
[3] Fili, accedens ad servitutem Dei, sta in justitia, et in timore et præpara animam tuam ad tentationem.—Eccl. ii. 1.

treasure that you have to guard, and to bring with you to the grave, the more thieves you will find who, attracted by it, will be always on the look-out to deprive you of it. You are the snow-white lambs of the flock of Christ, as I proved to you before from the holy Fathers; and on that very account, you have to guard yourselves all the more carefully from the attacks of the hungry wolves, who will be attracted by your whiteness. As far as purity is concerned, you are compared, by the holy Fathers, to the angels. But do not, therefore, be too confident; remember that even the angels in Heaven were not safe, and that millions of them fell, through pride, into the abyss of hell. You are the most intimate servants of Jesus Christ, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; but for that very reason, as is also the case in worldly courts, you will have many to envy you, who will try to deprive you of your Master's favor by every means in their power. The enemies who divide their forces when attacking other souls, will unite together to make common cause against you. Some souls are attacked by the devil, others by the corrupt world, and others again are fiercely combated, and led into sin by their own flesh. You will not be free from any of these: the three together, the devil, the world, and the flesh, will declare war on you, without truce or intermission.

From the devil.

The devil, whom the Scripture calls the unclean spirit,[1] and the sworn foe of purity, is filled with rage when he sees young boys and girls, who are apparently the weakest, courageously opposing his suggestions, and leading a chaste life; and because he has a bitter hatred against Jesus Christ, who destroyed his kingdom, and knows that God has selected you as His spouses and keeps you for Himself, therefore the wicked spirit employs all the means in his power, and all his hellish craft, if not to deprive you altogether of your purity, at least to sully it and to make you unfaithful to your heavenly Bridegroom. It is he of whom the Gospel of next Sunday says: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man...." (and you have driven him away from you by embracing the unmarried state). "he saith: I will return into my house, whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in, they dwell there,"—and do not allow themselves to be banished so quickly—"And the last state of that man becomes worse than

[1] Spiritus immundus.

the first." [1] Therefore, Christian virgins, St. Peter warns you, above all, to be cautious and vigilant: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." [2]

From the corrupt world.

The other enemy who unites with the devil to hinder your holy purpose, is the vain and perverse world, whose maxims, usages, and teaching are almost always opposed to the life of Jesus Christ and to the teaching of His Gospel. I mean the worldly people among whom you have to live, whose society and companionship you cannot always avoid, and who will often put temptations in your way; for they will cajole you, laugh at, flatter, and caress you; they will lead you into places, occasions, and circumstances, in which the purity of the heart, at least, is in great danger of succumbing before long. You will see many things in them, and hear much from them, which, if you do not overcome, will soon deprive you of your precious treasure. If they can do nothing else, they will try to make you imitate their vain and apparently not unlawful usages, by which the spirit of the world will soon find a place in your heart, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, which cannot endure the world, will be driven out, little by little; and thus you will lose the special favor and affection of your heavenly Bridegroom, and, as a matter of course, you will give way to the first temptation that assails you.

From their own flesh.

The third, and most formidable enemy, whom you can avoid least of all, and who is with you day and night, wherever you are, is your own flesh, the innate carnal desires of your nature, that wretched consequence of original sin that is found in all men, of which St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, the vessel of election of Jesus Christ, says with fear and trembling: "But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is, in my members." [3] His meaning is: I constantly feel wicked desires that obstinately contend against the knowledge that I have, for they cannot bear to have the flesh so curbed that it can never enjoy forbidden pleasure. "Unhappy man that I am; who shall deliver me

[1] Cum immundus spiritus exierit de homine.... dicit: revertar in domum meam, unde exivit. Et cum venerit, invenit eam scopis mundatam et ornatam, tunc vadit et assumit septem alios spiritus nequiores se, et ingressi habitant ibi. Et fiunt novissima hominis illius pejora prioribus.—Luke xi. 24–26.

[2] Sobrii estote et vigilate: quia adversarius vester diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit, quærens quem devoret.—I. Petr. v. 8.

[3] Video autem aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meæ, et captivantem me in lege peccati, quæ est in membris meis.—Rom. vii. 23.

from the body of this death?"[1] Oh, holy Apostle, art thou, too, afraid of thy enemy, the flesh? And we poor mortals, what have we not to fear? True, indeed, is what thou sayest elsewhere: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels;"[2] we have a great treasure in the purity that we observe for the love of God, but, alas! in very weak and frail vessels,[3] of which we must be as careful as if they were made of glass, or they will be broken and we shall lose our treasure. So you see that everything is in arms against perpetual chastity: it is attacked on all sides by crafty enemies; earth and hell have united against it. But why do I speak so? It seems as if I wish to unsay what I said in my last sermon. I have represented to you the unmarried state as one full of beauty, glory, dignity, and happiness, so as to give you all a desire for it; and now do I recall my words, by representing it as so full of temptations and dangers, that you might be easily made afraid of it? Not so, my dear brethren; such is not my meaning; for, with the holy Apostle, St. Paul, I exhort you to embrace that state of happiness and perfection, if God calls you to it; but I wish also to warn and advise you to live according to your holy state, by the aid of the necessary helps that your heavenly Spouse will not fail to give you, as He has promised.

Still they have help and protection enough.

It is true, Christian virgins, that you have powerful enemies, against whom you must fight almost daily; but you have also still more powerful protectors, who are always ready to fight on your side, and, if you wish, to gain the victory for you. I say again, that it is very difficult to keep one's purity untarnished amidst so many attacks; but the difficulty arises from the weakness of our nature, which supernatural grace can easily overcome. It is true that, in the world, you are exposed to many dangers of losing your chastity, but you must have confidence in Him, who wishes to encourage you by saying to you: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world,"[4] and placed it under my feet. He who has called you to this state and given you the will to follow His call, will also enable you, if you desire it, to fulfil what you have vowed or promised to Him. The devil is an enraged dog, who can bark but cannot bite any one who does not wish to be bitten. The vain world is a decoy, that can charm and attract, but can draw no one into its net that does not wish to follow its usages. The flesh is a shameless and un-

[1] Infelix ego homo! Quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?—Rom. vii. 24.
[2] Habemus autem thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus.—II. Cor. iv. 7.
[3] In vasis fictilibus. [4] Confidite, ego vici mundum.—John xvi. 33.

tamed beast ; it can rise up insolently against the will and right reason, and thus trouble the spirit, but it cannot force any one to sin who does not deliberately submit to it. In a word, the unmarried state is full of temptations and dangers, but it is also full of graces and helps, by which one can easily overcome the former ; as I shall prove in the

Second Part.

From Christ their Spouse.

Nothing gives more concern to a bridegroom than to see strangers courting the love of the spouse whom he loves, and whose love he desires. Even an outward mark of friendliness shown to her, although it may not be dangerous, causes him pain and uneasiness ; because his jealous love makes him afraid that she, whose whole heart he desires to possess, may feel an inclination for some one else. When this jealousy becomes excessive amongst married people, what misery it causes, and what misunderstandings, hatred, and enmity between friends and neighbors! So that sometimes the husband does not trust his wife, nor the wife her husband, and a feeling of bitterness is excited, when one speaks with the other, visits a friend, or is visited. But I need say no more of this ; only I can conclude from it that, if a bridegroom is so jealous as to feel uneasy and troubled when a stranger shows his bride any mark of friendliness, because he thinks it might lessen her love for him, how much less could he suffer her to be made the object of an impure love, in his very presence? How could he look on and see violence offered to his beloved spouse, without doing all in his power to save her? Oh, certainly, he would willingly expose his own life to danger, in order to rescue his spouse from dishonor. Your Bridegroom, Christian sons and daughters, to whom you have promised perpetual chastity, love, and fidelity, is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the Almighty God, whom nothing can withstand; as I have shown in my last sermon. He is a tender lover of chaste souls, who shed every drop of His Blood for you ; He is the jealous and loving Bridegroom of your purity, in which He cannot bear to see the least spot, who wishes to have your hearts, and your whole hearts, for Himself alone. Do you then think that He can look on when you are tempted and excited to unfaithfulness by His sworn enemies, without doing anything to help you? Can you imagine that He would allow that treasure, which He values so highly, and which you have resolved to keep forever through love of Him, to be stolen from you by violence.

and that He would not assist you in your necessity and save you from danger? Oh, no, be not afraid! Let the dangers and temptations be what they will, Jesus Christ will not leave you without help. His own honor is concerned; He will not permit your purity to become the prey of robbers, as long as you—and attend to what I am now saying—are not wanting in anything that your state requires of you.

One of the means of preserving purity is true humility.

And what is that? I answer: true humility, modesty, and trustful prayer. If you attend to these three things, you can defy all your enemies, and need never fear them. Humility will drive away the devil and his inspirations; modesty will put to shame the world and the seductions of the children of the world; prayer will subdue the flesh, and keep its unruly desires in check. If you fail in any of these three things, then you will soon lose the treasure of your purity. First, then, as to humility. Although that virtue is necessary to all men who wish to save their souls, inasmuch as we serve a God, "who resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace;"[1] a Lord who, to give us an example, emptied Himself and humbled Himself even to the death of the cross; and since we publicly acknowledge a law and a Gospel, the fundamental doctrine of which is humility and self-abasement; and adore a Teacher who said: "Amen, I say to you; unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;"[2] although, I repeat, humility is necessary for all men, as a means of salvation, it is absolutely necessary, above all, to those who wish to preserve their virginal purity intact. Does any one, says St. Augustine, wish to exhort the faithful to perpetual chastity, according to the advice of St. Paul? Then he must not merely describe the excellence and dignity of virginity, so as to excite a desire for it, but also he must exhort and warn those who embrace that state, not to think anything more of themselves on that account.[3] Married people, although they do not live in a state of perfection, like virgins, if they are humble, will follow the Lamb of God better than the virgin who is proud; nay, the latter is very far, on account of her pride, from Him who says: "I am meek and humble of heart."[4] Almost the same words are used by St. Bernard, when speaking of the most glorious and most humble

[1] Qui superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.—I. Pet. v. 5.

[2] Amen dico vobis; nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xviii. 3.

[3] Non solum prædicanda est virginitas, ut ametur, verum etiam monenda, ne infletur.

[4] Mitis sum et humilis corde.—Matth. xi. 29.

Virgin Mary, the Mother of God : "If you cannot, or will not," he says, "imitate the purity of Mary, at least imitate her humility, and you will have done enough." "You can be saved without virginity, but not without humility."[1] The humble soul that laments the loss of purity, can please God ; but without humility, not even Mary, the Queen of virgins, could please Him.

Without humility, purity cannot last long.

And not only does virginity without humility fail to please God, but also, if you are not humble, no matter how chaste you are, you will certainly not long remain a pure virgin, says St. Gregory. You are like a tall tree that has not deep roots, which the first storm blows down. You are like a magnificent edifice, the foundations of which are not deep enough, and are built on sand, and which the first floods will carry away. Pride is, generally speaking, the forerunner and the chief cause of unchastity; and the justice of God generally permits the proud to fall into that degrading vice, so that they may learn to known their weakness and misery, and thus become humble. And sometimes, too, when the purest souls are tormented by foul temptations, thoughts, and desires, and when the flesh rises in rebellion against the will, if they wish to seek the cause of that, they will find that it comes either from some secret pride, or vanity, or self-conceit that they have; or that God permits those temptations to teach them humility, and to show them that they can do nothing of themselves; and they are miserable, indeed, without the protection of God, as St. Paul says of himself, after having described how he was rapt up to heaven and saw there wonderful things, that man may not speak of: "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me,"[2] to disquiet me, and torment me always, so that I might know that I am a poor mortal. Therefore, the crafty tempter, when he wishes to lead a soul into impurity, does not at once assail it with filthy temptations, for he knows well that they would have no effect on souls who fear God. What does he do then? He attacks the spirit first, suggests vain thoughts and self-conceit on account of the purity preserved for such a long time, and makes that soul look upon itself as better, more pious, and more perfect than others. If he succeeds in finding room for these thoughts, he will not have much trouble

[1] Sine virginitate salvari potes, sine humilitate non potes.

[2] Et ne magnitudo revelationum extollat me, datus est mihi stimulus carnis meæ, angelus Satanæ, qui me colaphizet.—II. Cor. xii. 7.

in destroying purity; for he knows that it must fall when pride enters the heart. But if, with all his craft, he cannot destroy humility in that soul, then he despairs of effecting anything and must take to flight. Therefore, I say again, Christian sons and daughters, if you wish to be and to remain pure virgins, be humble of heart, so that, always recognizing your own frailty, you may attribute the safeguard of the great treasure of your purity, not to yourselves, but to God.

Modesty.

From this humility of the heart must spring the outward humility of the body, or that modesty and reserve which is another necessary means of conquering the second enemy of your purity, namely, the allurements and seductions of the world. Modesty is a virtue which restrains all the senses and keeps guard over our behavior, conduct, eating, drinking, and dress; it is the great ornament of all who practise it, but especially of the female sex. To gratify every curiosity of the eyes, and to allow them to roam about everywhere; to listen eagerly to what is going on in town; to allow liberties to be taken with one's self and to take them also with others, although they may be apparently harmless; to go about laughing and joking with persons of the opposite sex, although they may be near relations; to be anxious to see and be seen; to pay and receive many visits; to mix up with all sorts of company; to be vain and frivolous in dress; all that is unbecoming even in one who intends to be married; such a person is contemptible even in the eyes of the world, and although the world may flatter those who act thus, yet it ridicules them behind their backs. Much less, then, would that unrestrained freedom suit a spouse of Jesus Christ, who intends to preserve perpetual chastity.

Where this is wanting, chastity runs great danger.

What nonsense, some will think; I can be pure at heart, although I mix with people after the manner of the world; I need not sit like an owl at home; I intend to remain unmarried, and to preserve my purity, but I do not want to be called a devotee; I can best deceive the world by joining in its gayeties and conforming to its fashions and modes of life. Yes, you may deceive it, but take care that it does not deceive you first. Think and say what you will, from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, as the proverb says. The outward behavior is an index of the dispositions of the heart. I, at least, would not give much for such purity, for it must necessarily be exposed to countless temptations and dangers. If I see a man showing his money on a road beset by robbers, I should think him very im-

prudent, and indifferent as to whether he is robbed or not. That is the comparison that St. Gregory makes use of. "In this life," he says, "we are, as it were, on the road leading to our country. But the wicked spirits, like robbers, beset the road. He, therefore, who carries his treasure openly, wishes to be robbed."[1] It is certain that by such worldly conduct, one can have no knowledge of one's own weakness and frailty, consequently no true humility, and as a matter of course, there will soon be an end of perpetual chastity. Hence, as St. Ambrose says: "The property of true chastity is to tremble and fear at the very sight and voice of one of the opposite sex. Holy virginity is such a delicate flower, that not alone the least touch, but even a look would cause it to wither."[2] The proper place to preserve that flower is at home, alone in one's room, occupied with some suitable labor, unless one is obliged to go to church, to visit the sick, or to perform some other work of Christian charity and mercy which renders it necessary to go out of the house. "Live in such a way," writes Pope Liberius to the holy virgin Marcellina, "that all who do not yet know what your state of life is, may learn it from your outward modesty and humility, from your simplicity in dress, from your gait and speech, from your solitude and reserve, and may thus be able to say at once that you are a pure virgin and a spouse of Jesus Christ, and that thus no one may dare to do or say anything unbecoming in your presence. Live so seriously and regularly that the most reckless must be ashamed of themselves when they see you, and must think: Here our flatteries are of no use. Think, when dressing, of your Bridegroom, who for your sake was covered with His own Blood, as with a garment, on the cross, and who was crowned with thorns; and then, if you wish to resemble Him, you will be ashamed of the idle vanity of the world, etc." Certainly a beautiful lesson! Christian virgins, it concerns all of you!

Earnest prayer.

The third and last means of preserving perpetual chastity, in spite of the attacks of our worst enemy, the rebellious flesh, is earnest and hopeful prayer to God and the saints. It is an undoubted fact, that perfect purity is a gift of God, and a most special gift too, if we consider that the vast majority of men do not receive it. When Christ had explained to His disciples the

[1] In præsenti vita, quasi in via sumus, qua ad patriam pergimus. Maligni autem spiritus iter nostrum quasi quidam latrunculi obsident. Deprædari ergo desiderat, qui thesaurum publice portat in via.

[2] Trepidare virginum est, et ad omnes viri ingressus pavere, omnes viri affatus vereri. Sancta virginitas non solum tactu, sed adspectu etiam violatur.

indissolubility of the marriage tie and they wondered at it, as an unheard-of thing, and said: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry;"[1] He added: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given."[2] And immediately after, when He had spoken of the state of virginity, He said: "He that can take, let him take it."[3] It is certain, also, that no one, in the midst of so many dangerous temptations and carnal desires, can preserve this great gift by his own strength, without a special help from God, as Solomon says of himself while he was still innocent, in the Book of Wisdom: "And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord, and besought Him, and said with my whole heart, etc."[4] This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels," for he adds immediately after: "that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us."[5] That is to say, that we may acknowledge the safeguard of the great treasure of virginity to be the working of the almighty power of God and that we could not have it of ourselves. Now, as we have seen already, according to the present arrangements of His providence, God does not generally give His gifts and graces unless to those who pray to Him, and He has promised to grant everything to prayer; His wish is that we should humbly and constantly acknowledge before Him, that we always stand in need of His help.

Therefore they must frequently and confidently call on God for help.

Pray then, my dear brethren, pray constantly, nay, according to the advice of St. Paul, let your minds be always united to God. For you, especially, who have determined to observe perpetual chastity, it is necessary to follow this advice. Say daily to God, in the words of the Wise Man: I acknowledge, oh, Lord, and Thou knowest it, that I cannot live chastely, unless Thou helpest me;[6] therefore I fly to Thee, as to my only Helper and Protector, in the dangerous combat that I have to sustain against the desires of the flesh; I cast myself upon Thy Fatherly mercy, I give my purity to Thee; when my strength fails, be Thou my

[1] Si ita est causa hominis cum uxore, non expedit nubere.—Matth. xix. 10.

[2] Non omnes capiunt verbum istud, sed quibus datum est.—Ibid. 11.

[3] Qui potest capere, capiat.—Ibid. 12.

[4] Ut scivi, quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det, et hoc ipsum erat sapientia, scire, cujus esse hoc domum: adii Dominum, et deprecatus sum illum, et dixi ex totis præcordiis meis, etc.—Sap. viii. 21.

[5] Habemus autem thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus: ut sublimitas sit virtutis Dei, et non ex nobis.—II. Cor. iv. 7.

[6] Ut scivi, quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det.

helper and do not abandon me.[1] If Thou leavest me to my own strength, oh, then, I shall certainly lose the treasure that I wished to keep for love of Thee. My only consolation, on account of which, too, I need not fear, is that Thou dost not reject, nor refuse Thy help to those who, with childlike confidence, trust in Thee. And when the moment of temptation comes, say with the heart, rather than with the mouth (so that the devil, who, perhaps, excites the temptation, may not know what is passing in your mind) to your Bridegroom: "Oh, Lord, Thou art our Protector; see what the crafty enemy is doing,"[2] etc. Behold, oh, Lord, Thy enemies and mine are tormenting me, they are trying to make me unfaithful to Thee: "Lord, save us, we perish."[3] Thy honor and my soul are concerned in it; do not allow Thy enemies to boast of having dishonored Thy spouse. Having made these ejaculations with all possible fervor, you may confidently trust that you will not yield to the temptation, nor suffer the least injury from it; just as a little child does not fear, as long as it is in its mother's lap.

The Mother of God also. Power of prayer to her shown by an example.

Pray also every day to the most pure Virgin, and to your holy angel guardian. Trustful prayer to the Blessed Virgin gives great strength to resist temptations of the flesh, as, amongst many others, and according to daily experience, that young nobleman found out, of whom our Father Nicholas Zucchi, a man celebrated for his zeal for souls and holiness of life, writes. This young man was for years addicted to the shameful vice of impurity, which he learned in his travels in foreign lands, and brought with him to Rome. (Mark this, Christian parents, who, for the sake of the vain usages of the world, send your sons and daughters away to foreign countries; what they bring back with them when they come home, cannot be read on their foreheads, but it can be seen in their manners.) The evil habit was so deeply rooted in him, that he thought it impossible ever to get rid of it. After going often to confession, and using the means prescribed by his confessor, who was Father Zucchi, he still came back again with the same sins. The pious Father was greatly concerned, and as a last resource, resolved to leave his penitent entirely to the Blessed Virgin. When the unhappy young man returned to confession, and told his sins, the confessor said to him: My son, in place of imposing a penance on you, all I ask of

[1] Cum defecerit virtus mea, adjutor meus esto, ne derelinquas me.—Ps. lxx. 9.
[2] Defensor noster, aspice; insidiantes reprime, etc.
[3] Domine, salva nos, perimus!—Matth. viii. 25.

you is to choose the Blessed Virgin as your Queen and Mother, and every morning when you get up, say the Hail Mary in honor of her most pure virginity, and also the following prayer: "Oh, my Queen and Mother Mary, as a sign of my fidelity and submission, I offer thee this day my eyes, ears, tongue, heart, and my whole self; so that during the day I may be wholly thine. Keep me, then, and preserve me as thy property." Repeat the same prayer in the evening, kissing the ground three times. As often as a temptation comes to you by day or night, say at once: "Oh, Mary, remember that I am thine, protect me as thy property."[1] The young man followed the advice, and with the happy result that, although often tempted, he was never overcome afterwards. For, after the lapse of four years, having again returned to Rome, and declared his sins to the same confessor, the latter could hardly contain his astonishment, for, as he writes: "It seemed to me that I was hearing the confession of a holy and an innocent man."[2] And he asked the young man, how was it he was so much changed. Whereupon the latter answered with tears of joy: The devotion to the Mother of God, that you told me to practise four years ago, and which I have always observed, has worked this change in me. As often as I called on my Mother, in temptations, I found myself strengthened against temptation, and saved from sin.

Proved by another example.

When that story of Father Zucchi was once told in a sermon, many of those present, who practised the devotion afterwards, found that it helped them wonderfully. Amongst others there was an officer who had been living in concubinage; after a very few days, he and his partner in guilt repented and separated. When he wished to visit her some time after, not to commit sin, but to see whether she still remained good, as soon as he reached the door of her house, he felt a shudder creeping over him, and seeing the danger he was in, he cried out at once in his mind to Mary for help: "Oh, Lady, help me, for I am tempted!"[3] and he at once felt himself pushed away by an invisible hand, and found himself at his own house. Not long after, the mother of another young man who used the same means, came to the College to thank the Father for having changed her son from a devil into an angel. Ah, my dear brethren, would that I were so happy as to impress this devotion and childlike confidence in

[1] Domina, recordare, quod tuus sim; tuere me tanquam rem tuam propriam.
[2] Videbar mihi audire confessionem sancti et innocentis hominis.
[3] Domina, adjuva me, quia tentatus sum!

the Blessed Mother of God, on so many young boys and girls, who are often instructed in wickedness of which they knew nothing before, but which they with difficulty relinquish afterwards, by impious agents of the devil who betray young people. And the unfortunate boys and girls continue their bad habits even in their old age, until they sink into the abyss of hell! This devotion would help many of them. I beg of you all at least to honor Mary as your Mother, with constant and childlike love.

Conclusion.

Christian sons and daughters, who are called by God to the unmarried state, you have powerful weapons to repel the attacks of the enemies of your chastity, in true humility, inward and outward modesty, and fervent prayer. Use these weapons constantly, and you may say boldly with the Apostle Peter: Lord, it is good for us to be here;[1] we will live in this state until death! I rejoice, then, at the happiness that the Lord gives you on earth, and at that which you will possess, when you will follow the pure Lamb of God, whithersoever He goeth, in Heaven. Amen.

[1] Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.

ON THE MARRIED STATE.

TWENTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE COURSE TO BE ADOPTED BY THOSE WHO INTEND EMBRACING THE MARRIED STATE.

Subject.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Vocatus est autem et Jesus, et discipuli ejus ad nuptias.—John ii. 2.

"And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage."

Introduction.

Happy people, who had the great honor of having Jesus at their marriage feast! What a blessing must follow the presence of such a Guest! My dear brethren, all married people can have the same honor and happiness, morally speaking, in our days, if they only invite Jesus. He is willing to be present at every marriage, but He will not come uninvited. That invitation is absolutely necessary for the happiness of the married state; but, alas, the majority neglect it, to their own great loss. To remedy this neglect, is the object of my present sermon, since the greater number of marriages take place at this time. If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be really present at it. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must remain with the married couple during their lives. Such is the division of my subject. It is a very important one, which will serve for the instruction of the single as well as the married, and will be of use to all. But it cannot be all treated of in one hour, so that I will now consider only the first point, and I repeat—

Plan of Discourse.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding. That is the whole subject.

Christ Jesus, the true Lover and Bridegroom of souls, Thou didst not refuse the invitation to the wedding of old, but went thereto with Thy Mother and Thy disciples; do not refuse to listen to our prayers to-day, but come into our midst by Thy help and grace, with Thy Mother and Thy holy angels, so that all here present may, according to their different states in life, derive fruit from what I am about to say to them in Thy name.

Great men are generally invited to a banquet some days beforehand.

When one is invited by a stranger to dine, the invitation is not generally given on the day of the banquet, and much less when the meal is on the point of commencing. No; for such an invitation would cause the guest annoyance, instead of honoring him. For he would think: My meal is already prepared for me; I see clearly that this invitation is not for my sake; it seems that one of the invited guests did not come and that I am expected to fill the empty chair. That will not do; if this invitation was honorably meant, I should have got it yesterday. This is especially the case when some great man is invited. Intimate friends do not stand so much on ceremony; if they meet each other in the street, the invitation is given and accepted without more ado. But that is not the proper way to act with a great man: he must be invited with becoming politeness, one, two, and even several days beforehand.

In the same way must Jesus be invited by those about to marry.

Christian sons and daughters, if any of you here present intend entering the holy state of matrimony, is it not your wish to have a marriage feast? And you hope also to have blessings and happiness in your marriage? Without doubt you do. But from whom do you expect it? Certainly from Him who alone can give it. And who is that? Is it not Jesus, your God, from whom all blessings must come? You do not wish, then, to exclude Him from your wedding? I am quite sure you do not. Very well, so far, but you must invite Him. And when? When the bridal-dress is ready, when you are about to go to church, or when the marriage feast is already prepared? Oh, no, that would be too late altogether; it would be very impolite conduct toward such a great Lord, and a Guest who is so necessary, so gracious, and so good. He must be invited long beforehand.

That is, to ask Him for advice.

Now what do I mean by this? As soon as the first thought of marriage comes, Jesus must be invited first of all, before any one

else; that is, by frequent, constant, humble, and fervent prayer, and by the practise of virtue. He must be asked for light and grace to know if that is the state in which God wishes you to be; whether it is the state in which, according to His will, you can best serve Him, and save your souls, which, as we have often heard, is our greatest, most weighty and only business in this world. Jesus must be consulted to know whether the partner you have chosen is the one that He, in His inscrutable decrees, has determined for you from all eternity.

This deliberation is necessary for all, no matter what state they embrace.

This prayer and deliberation with God is most necessary for all, in the choice of a state of life, no matter what it may be; because, generally speaking, our eternal happiness or misery depends thereon. It is true that one may save his soul in any state; but it is not true that each one may save his soul in every state; and it is an undoubted fact that one cannot save his soul in a state to which he is not called by God, unless with great difficulty. God and God alone knows what our state must be. He has reserved to Himself, as the only Father of our souls, the right of determining what state is the best for the spiritual welfare of each one of us. It is to God, and God alone that men ought to appeal for guidance in this matter, and therefore, His advice must be asked first of all. And how could any one reasonably hope for or expect the assistance of special helps and graces in a state to which God has not called him, and which he embraced of his own accord against the divine will; even if that state were the holiest in the world? Would a prince continue his favor and give a yearly salary to a servant of his, who would undertake all kinds of business without the prince's knowledge and consent? Would he not rather punish that man for his presumption? Therefore, the will of our Lord is that we consult Him first, and ask His advice by prayer; as I have more fully proved in another sermon, when speaking of the choice of a state of life in general.

Especially for those who intend marrying, on account of the great difficulties of the married state.

Now all agree without difficulty that this is necessary in the choice of more perfect states, or of the higher offices and dignities of Church or State. It certainly would be presumption to engage in any of these without asking counsel from God. But there are few who say the same of the married state. Most people think their own will is a sufficiently good counsellor in that matter. But I maintain the direct contrary, and I say, that if there is any state in the world in which the divine inspiration and vocation are necessary, in order to obtain the divine blessing and to save one's soul therein, it is the married state. Why do I say so?

On account of the many obligations imposed on married people by their state, which cannot be fulfilled without a special assistance from God; on account of the many difficulties of this state, which cannot be borne without a special grace from God; and on account of the many dangers of this state, which cannot be overcome without the special help of God. I shall speak now only of the difficulties. Generally speaking, young people think that when their wedding day comes, they are about to enter into a paradise of joy and pleasure. No doubt it is so too, for the first day; but there are many other days to come, when you will both be old together; wait a few years, and you will feel what the Apostle, St. Paul, says to you: "If thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh."[1] Oh, holy Apostle, if there were only married people present, thou needest not tell them that twice; for most of them, convinced by their own experience, must agree that it is true, and with bitter sorrow they must acknowledge that the roses which seemed so beautiful at first, are full of sharp thorns, and that the few pleasures which their state allows are embittered by countless difficulties and annoyances that they have to contend with every hour and minute of the day. Nor can it well be otherwise.

The married state is one of servitude.

For the married state, which is, in the Christian law, the indissoluble union of husband and wife, what is it but a servitude, in which one party deliberately gives up all personal freedom for life to the other! And that servitude must last as long as both parties live, no matter how anxious they may be for it to come to an end, nor can it be dissolved except by the death of either. Once the word is spoken, you have given yourself over to another till death, without knowing how he will behave to you in the future, or how things will be with yourself; you give yourself to one who, before, had no right whatever over you, and who will now have an incontestable right over your person forever. It is a servitude that one selects freely, but which, I think, although I have not experienced it, must very often, in the long run, become galling. Certainly, by my ordination and priesthood, I have partially given up my freedom and placed myself in servitude, but only to God and to myself; to God my Supreme Lord, to whom I must belong altogether in any case; and to myself, whom I must in any case command; to God, whose yoke is sweet, and

[1] Si acceperis uxorem, non peccasti. Et si nupserit virgo, non peccavit: tribulationem tamen carnis habebunt hujusmodi.—I. Cor. vii. 28.

whose burden light, from whom I have nothing to fear like anger, ill-will, or bitterness, unless I first commence to quarrel with Him; for I know that He is always the same,—infinite, unchanging, most beautiful and most amiable. You, on the contrary, by the marriage tie, have, in addition to the service you owe to God, given up the right and authority you had over yourself to another person, to a stranger, who is in one mood to-day and in another to-morrow, and is as changeable as the moon in disposition, humor, inclination, and bodily health. Him you are now bound to obey in many things, not always as you will, but as he wills, and you are bound to do many things or to omit them, according to his wishes. By the vows of religion that I made in my profession, I have bound myself to obey another man; but at the same time I gave up all the burden and care of looking after my food, clothing, and support; for those things do not concern me. Your subjection in the married state does not free you from this care; but rather makes it greater for you than it was when you were living with your parents. My obedience does not place me irrevocably under a certain Superior, whom alone I have to obey. Sometimes I have one Superior, sometimes another; at one time I am living here, at another, elsewhere; and these changes certainly make the yoke of obedience very light, if there is any difficulty in it; you, on the contrary, by the sacramental contract, are always bound to obey the same person, as long as both of you live. If that person is exactly suited to your disposition, temperament, and inclination, and always remains so, that is indeed a great happiness; but it is a rare happiness. You must certainly have taken counsel from God. But if, as more frequently happens, the husband, after a time, begins to dislike his wife, or the wife her husband, what is then to be done? Ah, poor souls! there is no help for you; you are not less bound to each other on that account.

And without any time of probation.

If you had only known that beforehand! But that could not be. And here again there is a remarkable difference between my servitude and yours; for, when I made choice of the religious state, I had to go through my novitiate and years of probation, in which I could examine all the rules, have some experience of the difficulties of the state, and think long and leisurely over the whole matter, to see whether that state would not be too difficult for me, and whether it was suited to me, and I had the power of remaining in it, or of leaving it. What a great thing it would be, if there was a novitiate for the married life! There are

many who would not wait to finish the year, but would leave at the expiration of a few months. But there can be no such thing ; the final step must be taken at once ; if things go well, so much the better; if not, it cannot be helped. Once the marriage knot is tied you belong to another with whom you must live always ; and no matter how bitterly you may afterwards repent the step you have taken, you cannot recall your words or free yourself. You have given yourself over to another, without knowing much about him, or his disposition. At first, when he was seeking your hand, he was all amiability, good-humor, and friendliness ; nothing was to be seen but gifts and presents and most respectful bows ; nothing to be heard but sweet words and flatteries. You thought, no doubt, what an easy time you would have after your marriage. At first, your blind love would not let you see anything but what was good and amiable in the person of your future partner, and you thought that you were about to wed an angel of modesty, mildness, and love. But afterwards, when the first love was somewhat cooled down, and you learned to know each other better in the daily intimacy of your lives, you may have found an obstinate, passionate, and jealous man, in him whom you first looked upon as so amiable ; or a peevish, disagreeable, and headstrong woman in her whom you used to consider an angel of modesty and amiability. If that is the case, what are you to do? You did not think of that before, and now you must remain as you are, whether you like or not. There is no novitiate for you.

No hope of freedom, no matter how married people get on together.

What a trial, what a martyrdom it is for married people to have to live together, when their dispositions, opinions, and habits are not suited to each other ! When an intelligent, prudent, and quiet man has to live with a vain, conceited, and frivolous woman ; or a moral, modest, pious, and virtuous wife, with a wicked, unruly, and quarrelsome husband ; or a sparing, industrious, and diligent husband, who works day and night for his family, with a sensual, luxurious, indolent, and spendthrift wife, who makes away with her husband's hard-earned money, in idleness, frivolity, visits, gaming, amusements, tea parties, and unnecessary luxury in dress ; or a careful and prudent wife, who often takes the bread out of her own mouth for her children's sake, that she may support and bring them up decently, with a foolish husband who spends everything in useless entertainments, and in eating and drinking, and if his poor wife dares to utter a word of complaint, he storms at and abuses, or even beats her !

What a hell it is, when the two are like furies with each other, so that what the one desires, the other hates; one says yes, and the other no; while both are constantly quarrelling and finding fault with each other, and spend their time in cursing and fighting, and instead of one giving way to the other, and bearing each other's faults patiently, as St. Bernard says, they nourish bitter hatred against each other, so that they go from their hell in this life to the eternal hell in the next. Would to God that such unhappy marriages were rare in the world! And if a marriage turns out that way, what is to be done, I ask? Ah, poor souls, I repeat again that you must bear your burden; the knot is tied, and cannot be loosed. Any vow made to God, even the vows of religion, may be dispensed with by the Catholic Church, where circumstances require; but not even the Church can interfere with the bond of marriage; there is no dispensation from that. Such is the command of Christ regarding marriage: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,"[1] even if the prosperity or ruin of the whole Roman empire depended on it. This bond seemed such a hard thing to the Apostles, that they all determined it was better for a man to remain unmarried. Then His disciples said to Him: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry."[2] Certainly, answered Christ, foreseeing that the burden would be too great for the majority of them: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given."[3]

It is a state full of troubles, especially in the rearing of children.

Here I do not intend to allude to different troubles and difficulties which the married state brings with it, though not always, yet so generally, that even kings and princes are not free from them. If husband and wife love each other as they should, if their dispositions and inclinations are always in accord, certainly that is a rare happiness, and they who enjoy it should daily thank God in deep humility. But what anxiety, sorrow, and trouble it is for the other, if one should fall sick, or die! If the married couple have enough to live on, what constant trouble they have to preserve a decent competence or to increase their wealth! If they are poor, what trials they must undergo to earn their bread honestly! If they have nothing else to annoy them, what trouble they have with servants, neighbors, friends, and acquaintances; and especially in the rearing of their children, which is

[1] Quod Deus conjunxit, homo non separet.—Matth. xix. 6.
[2] Si ita est causa hominis cum uxore, non expedit nubere.—Ibid. 10.
[3] Non omnes capiunt verbum istud. sed quibus datum est.—Ibid. 11.

the chief end of marriage! How many difficulties they have, with their own likes and dislikes, with bodily sufferings, headaches, heartaches, weakness, and all the pains attendant on and consequent to childbirth. If the new-born infant is strong and healthy, what trouble the parents have with it! They must make themselves children again, they must laugh when their child laughs, cry when it cries, often lose their night's rest, etc. If there are four or five children in the family, they make such noise and trouble that the house seems too small for them; they are like a swarm of bees, perpetually buzzing around everywhere. One shouts out here, another there; one falls into the fire, another out of the open window; the third gets into danger on the staircase, the fourth runs the risk of wounding himself with a knife; one breaks a glass, another tears a book, the rest set to fighting with each other; the one wants something to eat, the other to drink; there is such a constant shouting and clamor going on, that the father and mother would require a hundred eyes and hands to attend sufficiently to everything. Even mothers who can afford to keep a nurse-maid to help them, are not free from such troubles. How must it then be for a poor woman who has to attend to everything herself, and who must trust to her own eyes and hands for everything? What must it be, when she sometimes has not bread for her children to eat, nor clothes to cover them? When her husband gets sick, or dies, and she thus loses the only support of herself and her children? Oh, misery and wretchedness!

Of grown children.

If the sons and daughters are grown up, what happens then? The Wise Man says: A wise, good, and obedient son, is the joy of his father; but a wilful, stupid, and disobedient son grieves his mother.[1] I say besides, that no matter of what kind children are, they are a trouble to their parents. For if they grow up to be all that can be desired, so also does their parents' care to keep them so increase, so that they may be happily settled in life. If the means of securing this latter object are wanting, what trouble the parents must undergo to find patrons and helpers! What a sorrow it is for them, if their beloved son or daughter, in whom they have centered all their hopes, dies in the bloom of youth! And how many other troubles parents have, that they can best speak of themselves. If the children are, on the other hand, so stupid as not to be able to learn anything, or so frail and delicate that they can do nothing for themselves, or so abandoned

[1] Filius sapiens lætificat patrem, filius vero stultus mæstitia est matris suæ.—Prov. x. 1.

and vicious that they cannot be governed nor induced to amend; if they are obstinate, disobedient, ungrateful, and insolent to their parents, so that the latter have only trouble and sorrow with them, what a trial, what grief, what desperation is theirs!

Many parents have to endure this great trial.

How many such unhappy parents do we not hear crying out with Rebecca, the mother of Jacob and Esau: "If it were to be so with me, what need was there to conceive?"[1] If these are the bitter fruits of marriage, it would have been better for me not to have thought of it, and to have remained as I was! I should then have no care nor trouble but for myself and my God. In a word, wherever we turn, we see troubles and difficulties, which it requires an iron patience, a special grace and help of God to overcome. When I think of all this, I am inclined to believe what Theophilus Rainaudus says in his Book of the Martyrs: "I look upon it as certain, and my own experience induces me to believe that most of the martyrs of Christ suffered fewer torments and had less pain than most married people."[2] Would to God that the latter bore their trials with patience and a right intention, as the martyrs suffered for Jesus Christ; then, indeed, would the angels hardly find palms enough to give them!

Therefore, if that state is to be happy, Jesus must first be asked for advice.

Why have I given such a long description of these trials, my dear brethren? Is it to make married people sorry for having chosen that state; or to make single people loathe it? God forbid that such should be my intention! The state is a holy one, and when one lives therein as becomes a Christian, it is a meritorious one and conducive to salvation, as I shall show afterwards; therefore I say with the Apostle: "Let her marry to whom she will, only in the Lord."[3] I wish every one of you happiness in that state. My only object in speaking to you of the difficulties of the married life, of which reason alone has sufficed to teach me a little, was to show you how necessary it is to have the grace of a special vocation to this state, and to be helped by God to surmount its difficulties; hence, too, I conclude, that it is necessary to invite Jesus to the marriage feast a long time beforehand, to pray to Him and seek counsel from Him. Is it Jesus who advised you to marry? Is it Jesus who called you to that state of life? Is it after long and earnest prayer, and through divine inspiration, that you have chosen that person as your companion through life? Oh, if that is the case, be comforted! No matter how things may go with

[1] Si sic mihi futurum erat, quid necesse fuit concipere?—Gen. xxv. 22.

[2] Exploratum duco, plurimos Christi martyres minora passos, et minus ærumnosos fuisse, quam plerique sint in conjugio.

[3] Qui vult nubat, tantum in Domino.

you, your marriage will be a happy one as far as your salvation is concerned. Divine providence will always accompany you and arrange everything for the best, as long as you are not unfaithful to God. The grace of vocation will influence your words and actions and your whole conduct, so that you can, little by little, overcome the bad temper of your husband or wife, and win his or her affections! The grace of vocation will lighten your burden, so that you can bear it; it will give you strength to overcome difficulties, and to bear patiently with crosses and trials, no matter how numerous they may be, and it will teach you to be resigned to the will of God, to heap up merits for your soul, and to gain a great reward in Heaven. The grace of vocation will replace earthly consolation and happiness, if those are wanting to you, by the inward peace of the soul; and there are many married people who hardly feel the difficulties of their state, and who live in continual contentment, on account of the grace of vocation. In a word, it is a happy and blessed marriage which results from the call of God.

Very few do so.

But, alas! how few there are who look at the matter in this light! How few Christians, even, who invite Jesus a long time beforehand to their wedding! How few who first ask advice from God by prayer! They ask for advice, as we have seen already, but from what? Their own animal appetites: Can I satisfy my inclinations in a lawful manner by marriage? Very well, then, I will marry; I need not deliberate any longer about it. They ask for advice; but from what? Their eyes and outward senses: Is that young man or that young woman beautiful enough? If so I require no more; I will marry. They ask advice, too, from the covetous and transitory world: Is that young man or woman rich and well off? Has he or she any hopes of inheriting property? Is that person of a high family? Can I, by such a marriage, obtain a high office or a good appointment? Such are the things people seek after. They ask advice, but from whom? From their parents, and quite right too: but they must not ask their parents alone, nor first of all: "House and riches are given by parents," says the Wise Man, "but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord."[1] And meanwhile, whatever their thoughts, desires, or deliberations may be, they seldom or never think of God beforehand; they concern themselves little about His will or vocation. Sometimes, indeed, they practise certain devotions to obtain hap-

[1] Domus et divitiæ dantur a parentibus, a Domino autem proprie uxor prudens.—Prov. xix. 14.

piness in the married state, but when? When the matter is already settled, and the engagement entered on.

Hence so many unhappy marriages.

What wonder is it, then, that continual happiness in the married state is such a rare thing in the world? What wonder is it that unhappy marriages are the rule? Listen to that man or that woman wailing and lamenting like a poor soul in purgatory, if not cursing and raving like a lost soul in hell; or if they do not show their grief outwardly, moaning and sighing in their hearts: God help me, what a miserable state I am in! Would that I had never seen that person! Unhappy day on which we first became acquainted! How much better it would be for me to have remained as I was! At least I may complain to God, who gave me that husband, or that wife! But what are you saying? How can you complain to God? He can say to you: Have I given you your husband, or your wife? You never consulted Me, nor spoke to Me, and how can you now expect consolation and help from Me? "What have I to do with you?"[2] The state you are in is your own work; you selected it blindly, without waiting for a vocation from Me. Unhappy is the marriage to which Jesus is not invited beforehand!

Conclusion and exhortation to the unmarried.

Unmarried sons and daughters, to you especially do I address these words of warning, for you can still prevent future misery and a useless repentance; think, and think well, before you undertake a matter on which principally depend your whole future life, your temporal happiness, the salvation of your soul and your eternity in Heaven or in hell. Remember, as I have often told you, that your only business in this world is to serve God and to save your souls, and that you must therefore choose that state of life in which you think that you will best be able, according to the divine will, to accomplish this one important business. But first of all, invite Jesus to assist you in your deliberation; think of the matter before God; ask Him for advice, since He knows best what is most suited for your temporal and eternal welfare. Pray, and pray daily to the Most High to show you in what state He wishes you to serve Him and save your souls. If then you are happy in the state you choose, you have a two-fold happiness; if not, you can at least have the consolation and comfort of knowing that you did not act through self-will, but in obedience to the divine vocation, and you have only to bear the trials and contradictions that God wishes you to bear. And that is consolation enough for a soul that seeks to please God.

[2] Quid mihi et tibi?

For married people who did not ask Jesus for advice.

Ah, some will perhaps say—who are in the married state, and who groan under its yoke, because they heeded not the divine vocation, nor asked advice from Jesus—what have you to say to me? Have I no consolation to hope for, either from God, or from the world, so that I must despair? No; hear what you have to do: you must act as Esau did when Jacob deprived him of his father's blessing; he cried out with tears in his eyes and trouble in his heart: "Hast thou only one blessing, father? I beseech thee, bless me also."[1] Hast thou only one blessing, so that because I come too late, thou canst not bless me? I beseech thee, bless me also.[2] In the same way you, too, Christian married people, can and must ask your heavenly Father for a second blessing, with all the greater humility, repentance, and patience in bearing your trials, since you have neglected the first grace. Heavenly Father, hast Thou, then, no blessing left for me? The treasures of Thy grace are inexhaustible; no one comes too late, who appeals to Thy generosity and mercy; I acknowledge that I have done wrong, oh, Lord, in thinking so little of Thee, and neglecting Thee in the choice of a state that now presses heavily on me! I am sorry for it from my heart! Do not turn away Thy merciful eyes from me; abandon me not to my own weakness and frailty! I do not refuse to suffer, for I know that I deserve it, and therefore I willingly resign myself to Thy fatherly decrees. One only request I make of Thee: give me, too, Thy divine blessing; that is, strength to bear the difficulties and trials of my state with Christian patience, through love of Thee, so that I may not lose my soul, and that by temporal sufferings I may gain eternal joys. Pray thus with childlike confidence, and you will move the God of mercy to bless you, as Isaac blessed the weeping Esau: "And when he wept with a loud cry, Isaac, being moved, said to him: In the fat of the earth and in the dew of Heaven from above, shall thy blessing be."[3] The same I wish to you, from my heart: the fat of the earth,[4] that is, inward consolation in your difficulties on this earth; the dew of heaven,[5] that is, when those difficulties are passed, an eternal reward in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

[1] Nam unam tantum benedictionem habes pater? Mihi quoque obsecro, ut benedicas.—Gen. xxvii. 38.

[2] Mihi quoque, obsecro, ut benedicas.

[3] Cumque ejulato magno fleret, motus Isaac dixit ad eum, in pinguedine terræ, et in rore cœli desuper erit benedictio tua.—Gen. xxvii. 38-40.

[4] Pinguedinem terræ. [5] Rorem cœli.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.

Subject.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must come to it. 1st. In purity of conscience. 2d. In purity of intention. 3d. In the pure love that the new-married couple must have.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Ait illi Jesus: Ego veniam.—Matth. viii. 7.
"Jesus saith to him: I will come."

Introduction.

What goodness and benevolence on the part of our loving Saviour! He promised to be present even when He was not asked to come. For, as we read in to-day's Gospel, the Centurion did not ask Christ to come to his house, since he thought himself unworthy of that honor; he said, with the greatest reverence: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof."[1] He merely represented briefly to our Lord the illness of his servant: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented."[2] And Jesus was ready at once: I will come.[3] How much more ready, my dear brethren, will He not be to go where He is invited and pressed to go, by humble and fervent prayer? Those who heard the sermon of last Sunday will understand what I mean, although I did not then treat of all the subject matter. My subject then was, that if a marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be invited to it beforehand. That is to say: long before any one intends embracing the married state, he must pray to God for light, and take counsel from Him, to know if that is the state in which, according to the divine vocation, he can best attain his last end; and that, especially, on account of the many difficulties of this state, which cannot be overcome without special grace and help from God. Christians who are about to get married, if you invite Jesus in

[1] Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.—Matth. viii. 8.
[2] Domine, puer meus jacet in domo paraliticus, et male torquetur.—Ibid 6.
[3] Ego veniam.—Ibid. 7.

that way, I can assure you that He will say to you: "I will come."[1] And this is very necessary, too, for a marriage to be happy. It is not enough to invite Jesus beforehand, because—

Plan of Discourse.

Jesus Himself must come to the marriage. This is the matter of to-day's instruction for those who intend entering on the married state, as well as for married people who had Jesus present at their wedding, to their consolation, and for those who erred in this point, that they may profit by salutary advice. And how is Jesus to come to your marriage? He must come to you in a pure conscience. The first point. In a pure intention. The second point. In a pure love. The third point.

Oh, Lord, come in that way to all marriages; or rather, Christians who are about to marry, bring Jesus with you, and your marriage will be full of happiness and blessings. Help us herein, with thy powerful intercession, oh, Mary Immaculate, Spouse of the Holy Ghost; and you, holy angels guardian, prepare the hearts of your charges for this.

False doctrine of heretics regarding marriage.

Heretics, who at different times have attacked almost all the articles of faith, the sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, with their poisoned weapons, have not spared the holy sacrament of matrimony nor the married state, but have tried to degrade it as much as possible. The Manichæans and Simon the Magician called matrimony an invention of the devil, by which he hopes to fill hell with souls, and to make a new hell on earth by jealousy, quarrelling, cursing, adultery, and other vices. Martin Luther and Bucer say that it is a mere worldly contract, which one can make and dissolve at will, just as one can buy a house, and keep it if he chooses, and if not, sell it; so that the wife is free to leave her husband, and the husband his wife, and to marry again at pleasure. But these people do not deserve to have their names mentioned here, and it is as little to their honor as if I said that a robber steals and murders. SS. Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine say, against the first mentioned heretics: How can matrimony be an invention of the devil? Did not God Himself first appoint it in Paradise, and establish it as the means of propagating the human race? Did not Mary, the Mother of God, enter that state, since she was the true and holy spouse of St. Joseph? Did not Christ Himself approve of

[1] Ego veniam.

and honor it, when He went with His disciples to the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee! The Catholic Church condemns the teaching of the other heretics, since, acting on the command of Christ, she looks upon the marriage-tie, when once fully contracted, as utterly indissoluble in any and every circumstance, even though the happiness of the whole world depended on its dissolution.

Matrimony is a holy sacrament.

In a word, and that we may not have to dispute long with heretics, matrimony is a sacred and holy bond, raised by Christ above nature: "Remember," says the Apostle St. Paul, "that marriage is honorable in all."[1] Look at it as you will, you will find it holy and sacred in all circumstances. Holy and sacred in its Founder, who is the Almighty God, the Holy of Holies, Jesus Christ. Holy and sacred in its signification, as being a figure of the union and espousals of the divine Word with human nature, and of Christ with His Church, and of the Holy Ghost with the souls of the just. Holy and sacred in its matter, which consists of human bodies that are called, by the same Apostle, temples of the Holy Ghost: "The temple of God is holy, which you are."[2] And again: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?"[3] Holy and sacred in its effects, which are sanctifying grace, that is thereby increased in the soul, and actual grace, by which married people are strengthened and helped to fulfil the duties of their state. Holy and sacred in its end, which is to multiply the children of God, and to bring them to eternal salvation. Holy and sacred as a sacrament instituted by Christ, and indeed, as St. Paul says in praise of it, a great sacrament: "This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church."[4] All infallible truths, my dear brethren.

Therefore it must be entered on with a pure conscience.

And what follows from them? That, as the first part of my subject says, Jesus must come to the marriage in the pure consciences of those who are about to get married. Holy things must be treated holily. You would not take a precious diamond and throw it to the fowl on the dung-hill, nor a pearl and cast it before swine. Matrimony is a great and holy sacrament, and therefore it must be received in the state of sanctifying grace; hence it would be a grievous sacrilege and a new sin to receive it with a conscience burdened by mortal sin. All Catholics know that it

[1] Honorabile connubium in omnibus.—Heb. xiii. 4.

[2] Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos.—I. Cor. iii. 17.

[3] An nescitis, quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti, qui in vobis est?—Ibid. vi. 19.

[4] Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia.—Ephes. v. 32.

is a great crime to confess one's sins and receive absolution without sufficient sorrow and purpose of amendment, or having deliberately concealed a grievous sin. And why? Because Penance is a sacrament that gives grace. To approach the table of the Lord, and receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the state of mortal sin, without first going to confession—that is such a grievous sin that the bare idea of it fills even the tepid Catholic with horror and dread. Yet, alas, that crime is committed often by those who remain in the proximate occasion of sin, or who retain the property of others unjustly, or who nourish hatred against their neighbor, without any sign of amendment. It is related of Judas, the traitor, that while still bent on his impious purpose, he dared to receive Holy Communion from the Hands of our Lord. Wicked wretch that he was! thinks every good Christian. In the same way we may speak of all the other sacraments. But is matrimony worthy of less respect and honor than the others? Is it not also instituted by Christ, the Saviour of the world? Has it not the same power, through the merits of His bitter passion and death, to confer sanctifying grace, like the others? May not all that can be said in praise of the other sacraments, also be said of matrimony? Therefore, due proportion being observed, this latter requires the same dispositions of the heart, the same purity of conscience, the same devotion and humility, the same inward and outward modesty and reverence.

They sin against this who honor matrimony only as a worldly contract.

But if I could see into the hearts and consciences of those who are preparing for this sacrament, should I always find Jesus there? How many should I not see who are far away from Jesus, and who have invited the devil to occupy the principal place at their marriage feast? For, how is this holy sacrament generally treated? How great the difference that we make in our imagination and judgment between this and the other sacraments! For the latter, people prepare more or less carefully, as for a supernatural work, while the former is looked upon as a mere natural and worldly business, the only sanctity of which consists in the ceremonies of the Church, the prayers that are read by the priest, and the blessing given by him. The conditions that are to be observed by both parties in the contract, what property each one possesses, how the wedding garments, the festivities, and the other things of that nature are to be arranged, these are the first things that are looked after, and that form the subject of many meetings and consultations; if they are satisfactorily arranged, then there is no further anxiety. Thus, there is very

little devotion, or reverence, or preparation of the soul for such a great sacrament. Few think of the state of justification to which God calls them; few consider the necessity of grace and special helps to be able to live according to their state; and according to the teaching of theologians, this sacrament gives grace in a greater or lesser degree, according to the degree of preparation and disposition in the soul.

Who generally disgrace their wedding day.

And how is that day sanctified, on which such a great, holy, and sacramental mystery is accomplished? Is Jesus present at every wedding? Can He be found in the midst of abuses and licentiousness that so often take place? Can He be in the midst of impure pastimes and discourses; amid dancing and revelry; amid immoderate eating and drinking? Is there any real difference between such marriage feasts and the license of the carnival, which has come down to us from pagan times, and in which people of both sexes spend the night? Oh, just God, what canst Thou think of us in these troublous times, when we ought to be trying to avert Thy just anger, by humiliation and penance! But enough of this for the present, my dear brethren. I am filled with confusion when I think that the Jews in the Old Testament, when matrimony was not a sacrament, as it is now, put to shame the majority of Christians in this respect. We read in the eighth Chapter of the Book of Tobias, that the younger Tobias, on the day of his marriage, said to Sara his bride: "Arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day: because for these three nights we are joined to God. . . . For we are children of the saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God. So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together."[1] It is not forbidden to be merry and rejoice, but Jesus must be present in the pure consciences of the merry-makers. The Scripture says of the marriage of Tobias: "They went to the feast;"—but in what manner—"but the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord."[2]

They who receive this sacrament in the state of sin.

Ah, fear of the Lord, how art thou absent from the marriages of many Christians! Would that thou wert present in their hearts, even when they actually receive that holy sacrament! Yet I doubt very much if that is often the case. Generally speaking, people go to confession beforehand, but what sort of

[1] Exsurge, et deprecamur Deum hodie et cras, et secundum cras, quia his tribus noctibus Deo jungimur. . . . Filii quippe sanctorum sumus, et non possumus ita conjungi sicut gentes, quæ ignorant Deum. Surgentes autem pariter instanter orabant ambo simul.—Tob. viii. 4–6.

[2] Accesserunt ad convivium; sed et cum timore Domini nuptiarum convivium exercebant.—Ibid. ix. 12.

a confession is made, especially by those who have already sinned with each other by impure desires, words, and actions; of whom we shall speak more fully in the last point? And, humanly speaking, what sort of repentance and sorrow can they have for sins that they would be inclined to repeat as before, by impure desires? And thus, having added an additional stain to their souls in confession, they receive the sacrament of matrimony, and commit thereby a twofold sin, as Navarrus and other theologians teach. And how is that? If I, in the state of mortal sin, receive Confirmation, Holy Orders, or Extreme Unction; or if I confess without sorrow and purpose of amendment, in order to get absolution, or even to receive Holy Communion, I commit a grievous sin, but it is only one sin, because I alone receive the sacrament. On the other hand, when a person gets married, he is not only the recipient of the sacrament, but its minister also, who perfects the sacrament and confers its effects. At the moment when both express their consent, in presence of the parish-priest and the witnesses, if they are not laboring under any impediment, the bridegroom effects the grace of God, not only in his own soul, but also in that of his bride, just as the priest confers sanctifying grace to the penitent in the sacred tribunal. The parish-priest, although he is present, and blesses the newly married couple, does as little towards the sacrament of matrimony as the two witnesses. He is there only as the representative of the Church; the contracting parties alone administer the sacrament to each other. Consequently, if they do so in the state of mortal sin, they are guilty of a twofold irreverence: one, because they administer the sacrament unworthily, and another, because they receive it unworthily.

How can there be any blessing or happiness in such a marriage, from which Jesus is, so to say, driven away with contempt, although He may have been invited to come and His advice asked about it beforehand; in which the first step in the married life renews and increases enmity with God; in which the married couple, instead of receiving the sacramental grace that is so necessary for the fulfilment of the duties of their state, bring down upon themselves the curse of God? No, there can be no blessing nor happiness in such a marriage; so that Jesus must come to the marriage in purity of conscience. Yet this is not enough, for He must also be there in purity of intention, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

The married state must be entered on with a pure intention.

The younger Tobias in his marriage tells me what I have to say on this head (Alas, I am again forced to ask Christians to take pattern by a Jew!): "And now, Lord, Thou knowest"—such are the words of his prayer—"that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which Thy name may be blessed forever and ever."[1] So also prayed Sara, his wife: "Thou knowest, oh, Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust. . . . But a husband I consented to take, with Thy fear, not with my lust."[2] Christians who are about to get married, there you see the end and object of the married life, and the pure intention you must have in entering on it. There are, indeed, other motives which are lawful and even meritorious, such as the desire of being helped in housekeeping, of having good advice in business matters, of being consoled in trials and of being looked after in sickness and old age. These motives are good and praiseworthy, and they who have them can marry, although they intend, by mutual consent, to preserve their virginity in the married state. Again, there are many who fear that, on account of their frailty, they will not be able to preserve holy purity amidst so many dangers, and who get married in order to avoid offending God. This end, too, is not a bad one in itself, and St. Paul permits it, although he does not expressly command it. He writes to the Corinthians: "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to be burnt."[3]

The principal end must be the rearing of children.

But the true end and object of the married state, which ought to be first in the intention of all Christians who are called to that state by God, must be the bringing up of children, and that, too, through a supernatural motive, that they may multiply souls who can know, love, and praise God; according to the intention of Tobias: "In which Thy name may be blessed forever and ever."[4] Therefore, the Christian bride and bridegroom must thus resolve within themselves: I will serve my God as long as I live; to this

[1] Et nunc Domine, tu scis, quia non luxuriæ causa accipio sororem meam conjugem, sed sola posteritatis dilectione, in qua benedicatur nomen tuum in sæcula sæculorum.—Tob. viii. 9.

[2] Tu scis Domine, quia nunquam concupivi virum; mundam servavi animam meam ab omni concupiscentia. . . . Virum autem cum timore tuo, non cum libidine mea consensi suscipere.—Ibid. iii. 16, 18.

[3] Dico autem non nuptis et viduis: bonum est illis si sic permaneant, sicut et ego. Quod si non se continent, nubant. Melius est enim nubere quam uri.—I. Cor. vii. 8, 9.

[4] In qua benedicatur nomen tuum in sæcula sæculorum.

end I am in the world; but I will not do that alone, I must have others with me to help me in the praise and service of my God, namely, my children, whom I will train and educate for that purpose, and thus by my zeal and diligence increase the glory and honor of God here on earth, even in the souls of others; my children, who, if they die in their infancy, after having received a new birth in God, by baptism, will be made friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ in the eternal joys of Heaven, where they will bless God and pray for me; or if they live a long life, they will, after my death, serve God on earth. As David consoled himself by the hopes he had centered in his children: "My seed shall serve Him,"[1] he said. In a short time I must die, and I shall not be able to praise God in this body of mine, which must rot in the earth; therefore, I wish to leave my children after me, that they may continue the work of praising God. I hope to have sons who in the ecclesiastical or in the religious state, will sing the praises of God day and night, and labor for His honor and glory. I hope to have daughters who will preserve their virginity, and thus attain a perfection that has been denied to me. Other children, too, I hope to leave behind, who by their learning and skill in public offices and appointments, or by their talents and labor, will contribute to the general well-being, and thus fulfil the will of God. "My seed shall serve Him." This is the proper end and object of the married state, says St. Augustine: "This should be the intention of all pious married people,"[2] if they expect happiness and blessings. Oh, what a meritorious state you have entered, Christian married people! What good may you not do! What great things may you not effect for your own salvation and that of others, and for the honor and glory of God, if this pure intention is always uppermost in your minds!

The majority sin against this especially those who only look for sensual pleasures.

But it is easy talking of a pure intention! Who ever thinks of it, when the thought of marriage comes into his head? How many are there who can truly say with Tobias: Lord, Thou knowest, for Thou canst see my heart, that I am not looking for any sensual gratification,[3] but for the accomplishment of Thy will according to my vocation, and for Thy greater honor and glory? Alas, what else, except this sensual pleasure, have some, not to say the majority, in their minds, when they are about to marry? But it is not right to speak too much of this matter, for fear of offending chaste ears and hearts. If what the Angel Raphael said

[1] Semen meum serviet ipsi.—Ps. xxi. 31. [2] Hæc esse debet piorum conjugum intentio.
[3] Domine, tu scis, quia non luxuriæ causa accipio conjugem.

is true, what sort of happiness or grace can such people expect, who receive the holy sacrament of Matrimony with an impure intention? "Hear me," said the angel to Tobias, when the latter was afraid to take Sara to wife, as the devil had already killed seven men whom she had married, "and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power."[1] But do thou "Take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children."[2]

God generally gives the devil great power over such people.

Over no state of life, my dear brethren, as a general rule, does God give the devil and wicked people more power, than over the married state, to do harm by witchcraft and sorcery, as Father Martin Delrio, who has written a book on the subject, testifies to from his own experience: "Infinite almost in number"—such are his words—"are the means used by the devil for this purpose."[3] Sometimes he makes use of secret and unusual weaknesses and ailments, so that married people, or their children, gradually lose all strength and die out like a shadow. People think it consumption, but in reality it is witchcraft. Sometimes he interferes with childbirth, and causes premature birth, or makes the child deformed, and even kills it before it is born. In the same book, Delrio mentions the case of a woman who, being pregnant, could not be delivered for eight whole years, until the witchcraft which caused her sufferings was discovered and defeated. Sometimes he changes the dispositions of married people, so that they are either filled with an impure love for strangers, and have no rest night or day, or they both begin to hate each other and live in strife and enmity. Father Candidus says that he knew a couple who, before their marriage, loved each other so dearly, that they could not suffer to be an hour out of each other's sight, but as soon as they were married they commenced to hate each other, when together, to such an extent that they fought tooth and nail; but when they were separated, their former mutual love returned, to be changed again into hatred at

[1] Audi me, ostendam tibi, qui sunt, quibus prævalere potest dæmonium. Hi namque qui conjugium ita suscipiunt, ut Deum a se et a sua mente excludunt, et suæ libidini ita vacent, sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus; habet potestatem dæmonium super eos.—Tob. vi. 16, 17.

[2] Accipies virginem cum timore Domini, amore filiorum magis, quam libidine ductus, ut in semine Abrahæ benedictionem in filiis consequaris.—Ibid. 22.

[3] Modis seu formis ad hoc utitur diabolus prope infinitis.

their first meeting. A fearful torment, certainly, to hate, when present, one who is loved when absent! How is it, my dear brethren, that witchcraft of this kind, and of other kinds of which we do not always hear, is of such common occurrence in the married state, although that state is strengthened by the powerful prayers, blessings, and ceremonies of the Church? "They who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust,"[1] over these the devil has great power, through a just judgment of God. Therefore, all who are about to get married, should follow the beautiful advice of the Angel Raphael to Tobias: "Take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children," and with the intention of bringing them up for God and for Heaven, "than for lust." And then Jesus will be present at the marriage, by purity of intention. Again, if the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be present at it by a pure love. Such is briefly the subject of the

Third Part.

The married state should be entered on with a pure love; in which many are wanting.

Oh, my dear Redeemer—I must here cry out—how few marriages there are, at which Thou art thus present! When Thou first camest into the world there was no place for Thee in the inn.[2] Alas, I am afraid, that if Thou wert to go about seeking admittance to marriages, Thou wouldst find no room in very many of them! For what a multitude of sins often accompany the bride and bridegroom to church, who thus enter the holy state of matrimony after having stained their virginal purity! How many marriages are not the actual result of unchastity? How often is it not the case that lost honor compels consent to marriage? Many go even so far as to think that a mere engagement is enough to make all things lawful to them. They keep company with each other, away from the eyes of their parents; they correspond, laugh and joke together, as if they were already married. But I do not wish even to think of this any longer. Oh, terrible day of divine justice, what a mass of sins thou wilt disclose, which have been committed by thought, desire, and deed, and of which they who commit them take no account, because, they say, we are married in the sight of God. You will see that; and many parents, too, will learn what a fearful responsibility they incur, by leaving their children alone with those whom they are about to marry, and by not preventing secret meetings and company

[1] Hi namque, qui conjugium, etc. [2] Non erat ei locus in diversorio.—Luke ii. 7.

keeping! They will learn, too, what a strict account they must render for having too long deferred without cause the marriage of their engaged children, and for having thus left the latter in the proximate occasion of sin. In a word, as far as impure love and pleasure is concerned, not a whit more is allowed to those who are merely engaged, than to other unmarried persons.

On which account many marriages are unhappy.

You wonder sometimes, my dear brethren, why there are so many unhappy marriages. To tell the truth, I wonder that there are not more of them, which end most miserably in continual quarrelling and fighting, in jealousy and suspicions, excited by the infidelity of one or other of the parties, so that there is no rest day or night; in frequent losses sustained in business, and in losses caused by the death, sickness, infirmities, disobedience, and ill-conduct of children; in continual impatience, discontent, trouble, and despair at the trials incidental to the state; and that they thus end miserably in time and in eternity. Then the unfortunate people sigh and moan and bewail their lot, without help, or advice, or consolation, or hope. But let them think for a moment how they entered on the married state, and how they lived before their marriage. Perhaps not very well. If so, they are the cause of their own misfortunes. They have made rods to scourge themselves by their frivolity and licentiousness, and by offending and neglecting God when preparing for their marriage; their sins are, in the hidden decrees of the Almighty, the torturers who now punish them. The Lord is indeed patient and long-suffering, He does not punish a crime at once; but He knows how to mete out a just chastisement for it, when the time comes! Formerly, when the sins were committed, He allowed them to remain unpunished for a time, but now the sinners must bear the heavy weight of their wickedness. Yet they may be happy in their apparent misfortune, if they only bear the burden as they ought.

Conclusion and exhortation to married people who have sinned in this way.

The only consolation and advice that I can now give to you who have sinned in this way, is to make a virtue of necessity, to convert your present sufferings into eternal joys, and even to lighten your burden, if not to remove it altogether when you have sufficiently atoned for your fault, by thinking and saying, with the penitent David, humbly confessing your sins and resigning yourselves to the will of God: "Thou art just, oh, Lord, and Thy judgment is right."[1] It is just that I should now have so much to suffer every day, and that I must often bear my hard

[1] Justus es Domine, et rectum judicium tuum.—Ps.cxviii. 137.

trials in silence. I can say nothing against Thee; the punishment Thou hast inflicted on me is just, and I have well deserved it by the sins that I committed in choosing and entering on my state of life so imprudently. I should have remembered beforehand that it is not thus that Thy blessing and my happiness are to be gained! But what I have done I cannot now undo. I confess my fault. Oh, Almighty Lord, I kiss the rod that I myself have placed in Thy hands, and which Thou now usest with fatherly kindness to chastise me, that I may avoid the rigors of Thy justice hereafter! May Thy Name be always blessed! (In the same manner may all pray, who in any way have offended God by mortal sin, and who now have to suffer trials and crosses.) Christians, if you are sincere in this, you may be certain that He, of whom the Prophet David says: "A contrite and humbled heart Thou wilt not despise,"[1] although you have sinned against Him, will not allow you to remain in your misery and suffering without consolation. If there are any who, having prepared the way for their marriage by sin, yet find things prospering with them, I cannot prophesy much good for them, unless they truly repent, live more carefully, and fulfil the duties of their state exactly; as I shall explain more fully hereafter.

For single persons who think of marrying.

For you, single people, who think of getting married, the conclusion to be drawn from this instruction, as far as my duty is concerned, is evident enough. It rests with you now to profit by it. Bring Jesus to your wedding by purity of conscience and by preparing properly for such a holy sacrament. Bring Him with you by a pure intention, suited to the holy state of matrimony, and to ensure His presence, bring with you a pure and virginal love. Whenever you are assailed by an impure temptation, think to yourselves: must I then give up all the happiness and blessings of my future state, for a momentary pleasure? If you find yourselves in danger of sin, get married at once, so as to cut off the danger: "Jesus saith to him: I will come."[2] If you are in those dispositions, I can assure you that Jesus will also say to you: "I will come." That is to say, the happiness and blessing which I wish you from my heart, will not be wanting to you.

For the other hearers.

And now that we, who are not called to the married state, may not go away from the sermon without profiting by it, let us renew every day our resolution and our fervor that we may adorn our souls with merits and good works, and thus prepare for that marriage feast, of which St. John says in the Apocalypse:

[1] Cor contritum et humiliatum non despicies.—Ps. l. 19. [2] Ait illi Jesus: Ego veniam.

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."[1] Blessed and more than blessed shall we be, if we can all meet there! That such may be the case, let us all now serve God constantly, with a pure conscience, with a pure intention of directing all our works to God, and with a pure love, free from all stain and suited to our state of life. Amen.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF MARRIED PEOPLE BEING IN THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD, THAT THEY MAY NOT LOSE THEIR SOULS.

Subject.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, especially as regards the salvation of the soul, Jesus must always remain with the married couple, even after their wedding, on account of the great dangers of their state, which they cannot overcome without the special assistance of God.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Domine, salva nos, perimus.—Matth. viii. 25.
"Lord, save us, we perish."

Introduction.

The poor disciples were in great danger of their lives! The wind howled and moaned; the waves of the stormy sea rose mountains high; their little vessel was almost covered by the foaming billows; they could do nothing but sit down and wring their hands, and await the destruction that seemed impending over them. The poor disciples were in extreme danger! But what am I saying? What had they to fear? They had with them Jesus, who placed bounds to the sea, and gave the winds their power, whose least command both elements must obey at once. It is true that Jesus was asleep, but they had only to awaken Him and ask Him to help them, and they would be at once freed from all dangers, as was really the case; for they cried out: "Lord, save us, we perish. Then rising up He commanded the winds

[1] Beati, qui ad cœnam nuptiarum Agni vocati sunt.—Apoc. xix. 9.

and the sea, and there came a great calm."[1] Happy the man, my dear brethren, who has Jesus at his side, and God as his Friend and Helper! Happy and secure in the worst temptations, in the greatest dangers of soul and body! But woe to him who is in danger, without the grace and friendship of Jesus! To my mind, the married state is like a tempest-tossed vessel; but do not be afraid, you married people, who have Jesus at your side! In the two last instructions I have shown, first, that if the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be invited to the wedding, on account of the many difficulties of that state, which cannot be overcome without getting counsel and help from God; and secondly, that Jesus must come to the wedding in purity of conscience, intention, and love on the part of those who are about to be married, in order that they may receive the sacramental and helping grace, without which they cannot fulfil the obligations of their state. Now I come to the third point, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, especially as regards the salvation of the soul, Jesus must always remain with the married couple, even after their wedding. And why? On account of the many great dangers of their state, which they cannot overcome without the special assistance of God. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon.

All of you who are unmarried, may learn from it to keep God always before your eyes, and to have Him always as your Friend in spiritual dangers. Let us pray, then, all together, through the merits of Mary and the holy angels: Lord, save us, we perish![2]

There are dangers of sin in every state.

No state in the world is as holy and perfect as not to have its special and manifold spiritual dangers and occasions of sin. In all places, at all times, snares are laid to entrap souls. The solitude of a convent, even, is not free from them. Religious in their cells, hermits in the remotest forests, living in caves, although always engaged in prayer, meditation, fasting, and works of penance, yet had enough to do to combat the suggestions and temptations of the devil, and the desires of the flesh that all men are subject to, and to preserve their innocence unsullied. How many of them, wearied with the fight, gave way to their weakness, and allowed the enemy to overcome them! How often

[1] Domine, salva nos, perimus. Tunc surgens imperavit ventis et mari, et facta est tranquillitas magna. – Matth. viii. 25, 26.

[2] Domine, salva nos, perimus.

has not the Church of God, to her great sorrow, seen those who shone like stars in her firmament, fall down in disgrace! She still mourns the loss of those whom she once fondly believed to have been written in the Book of Life. Miserable mortals are we, indeed! Not one of us can boast of being certain of salvation. Wherever we are, as long as we live, we are exposed to countless dangers; wherever we are we require the special help and assistance of God; wherever we are we must always keep Jesus before our eyes, have Him as our Friend, and cry out to Him, humbly and fervently: "Lord, save us, we perish!"[1]

But greater and more numerous in the married state.

Meanwhile, it is certain that one state of life is more dangerous in itself than another; and, when I consider the unanimous testimony of the Holy Fathers, and look at the matter itself, I must say that the married state is one of the most dangerous. And do you know the reason of that? To have a true friendship and tender love for creatures, and at the same time to love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength; to be bound to work with all possible diligence for money and temporal goods, and still to preserve poverty of spirit and detachment from earthly things, these are duties of which we might say, humanly speaking, that they run counter to each other and that they cannot be performed together. Nevertheless, you married people are obliged to perform them, or you will not be among the elect in Heaven. To do so is difficult, and requires great skill, and therefore your state is a dangerous one for the soul, unless you always keep God before your eyes, unless Jesus is always present to assist and help you by His grace.

Danger of sinning against the purity of this state.

As far as the purity of state is concerned, the married state is, in its own degree, a state of continence and chastity, as well as the state of celibacy and virginity, although not in such perfection as the latter; and even on this account it is much more dangerous, since it is more difficult to moderate and restrain ourselves when we are conceded a partial satisfaction for our desires, and the occasion of them is always present, than when we keep away from such satisfaction altogether, look upon it as absolutely forbidden, and keep the occasion at a distance. St. Augustine says: "There are many who can remain altogether continent in the unmarried state, more easily than they could use matrimony with due restraint."[2] Not everything is allowed to you married people: there are many things which reason and conscience would

[1] Domine, salva nos, perimus!

[2] Multi facilius se abstinent, ut non utantur nuptis, quam temperanter et bene utantur.

make you reprove as vicious. If you are in doubt about such things, ask your confessor. On this head I need only remark that being constantly in the occasion increases the danger of incontinence, and that there is great danger of jealousy, suspicion, and rash judgments if there is a too inordinate sensual love amongst married people. And on the other hand, what danger they run of committing grievous sin, if they neglect fulfilling the obligations of their state through a spirit of disunion, anger, hatred, and dislike! What great danger they run in the society which their position in the world obliges them to frequent; the danger, I say, of sinning at least by wrong imaginations and desires, especially if their first love has cooled down, or what is still worse, if they live in strife and contention with each other! For we are already by nature more inclined to what is unlawful, than to what is allowed.[1]

And more grievously than in the unmarried state.

Of course the unmarried are exposed to the same danger, but it is not so great, nor so serious for them. Not so great, because we have less desire for that which we have no experience of, than for that to which we have become habituated; nor so serious, because if an unmarried person sins against purity in thought or in action, he commits but one mortal sin, unless there are other circumstances which increase his guilt; but a married person commits a twofold sin in such cases: one against purity and another against conjugal fidelity; and if these sins are committed with other married people, even by an efficacious desire, then each time a threefold guilt is contracted: one against purity, and the other two against the conjugal rights of two individuals. Oh, Christian married people, keep God as your Friend always! Pray every day humbly, acknowledging your weakness, and with childlike confidence: "Lord, save us, we perish!"[2] Lord, help us with Thy grace; comfort and strengthen us that we may not be overcome by so many dangers, and lose our souls!

The dangers of many sins against conjugal love.

In addition to this, there is another, and to my mind, a more common danger, and one more difficult to be overcome, which arises from the indissolubility of the marriage tie, and from the fact that married people must be always in each other's society. The effect of the bond of marriage should be such a perfect union of hearts, such a tender mutual love of the husband and wife for each other, that the one would be ready, if circumstances required it, to give up possessions, home, and property, and everything in the world, for the other's sake, and even to leave father

[1] Nitimur in vetitum semper, cupimusque negata. [2] Domine, salva nos, perimus!

and mother, brothers and sisters, according to the express word of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife,"[1] and that he must do with a pure and true love. "Husbands, love your wives,"[2] writes the Apostle to the Ephesians; whom God has given you; wives, love the husbands to whom God has joined you: and the rule you have to follow, is to love each other, "As Christ also loved the Church."[3] That is to say, with a love that is true and constant even to the death of the Cross, that He endured for the Church. There, Christian married people, you have a pattern and example of the love that you must have for each other.

A love which must not interfere with the love of God.

But do not forget that a very necessary and delicate distinction must be made here between this love and the love of God: for the union of your hearts must never interfere with your union and friendship with God, and you must hate and detest whatever is asked or required from you against the law of God. In this sense are to be understood the apparently harsh words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Luke: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."[4] And how is that? asks St. Gregory. Must a man hate his wife? Does not the Apostle, at the command of Christ, say that he must love her tenderly? Nay, are we not commanded to love even our worst enemy? "Can we love and hate the same person?"[5] Yes, he answers, we must do both together. We must love that person as a friend and neighbor, but we must hate and avoid him as our worst enemy if we find him hindering us in the service of God. It is right for a wife to try with all diligence to please her husband, to obey him, to follow his advice, to adapt herself to his humor, and to do his will in all lawful things; she must do so, for it is her duty and obligation. But if he desires her to do anything unlawful, to take part in immodest conversation, or to frequent dangerous company, then she must use all her courage and strength to oppose and disobey him, for such is her highest obligation.

So that one never offends God for the other's sake.

For instance, if the husband has to suffer some contempt, injury, or injustice, the wife must have compassion and sympathy

[1] Dimittet homo patrem et matrem, et adhærebit uxori suæ.—Matth. xix. 5.

[2] Viri, diligite uxores vestras.—Ephes. v. 25.

[3] Sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.—Ibid.

[4] Si quis venit ad me, et non odit patrem suum, et matrem, et uxorem, et filios, et fratres, et sorores, adhuc autem et animam suam, non potest meus esse discipulus.—Luke xiv. 26.

[5] An simul, et odisse possumus, et diligeré?

for him, she must share his trouble and try to make it lighter as best she can. But she must not go farther than that ; she must not share his anger, hatred, or enmity ; she must not encourage him therein by her complaints, nor approve of his resentment and desire of revenge, nor join with him in cursing and vilifying his enemies. That would not at all become a Christian wife. When Christ instituted the sacrament of matrimony in His Church, He did not wish married people to share in each other's sins. In the same way, if the husband attempts to get an appointment, or to acquire property by unjust means, then it is time for the wife to act a heroic part and to oppose that injustice fearlessly and boldly. In the same way, and even still more strictly, is the husband obliged to act, if his wife endeavors to persuade him to do, or to undertake anything against the law of God ; he most sternly refuse to listen to her.

But, thinks the wife, I must obey my husband; and, thinks the latter, I must give way to my wife. By no means ; there can be no obedience, no giving way against the law of God. But he or she will then lose all love and affection for me. That cannot be helped : the love of God must be preferred to human affection. In such circumstances it is better for you to have the hatred, than the love of husband or wife. But there is an end to peace in the house. No matter; you will keep your peace with God, and with your conscience, and that ought to suffice for you, under the circumstances. But my husband, or wife, will give me all sorts of annoyance and trouble. Have patience, and you will have all the more merit for your soul, and all the more consolation in God. Oh, it is easy to talk of patience ; we have to live together constantly ; how can one be always patient, so as not to fail sometimes, either through love, or hatred, or fear? True ; it will not do merely to speak of patience in such a case ; and I must thank God that my own lot is so fortunate in this respect.

And here there is neither excuse nor exception.

But this is, after all, what I want to prove, namely, that the married state is a most dangerous one, in many respects, unless Jesus is always at hand to help with His grace. This is what St. Paul alluded to, when he wrote to the Corinthians about the happiness of the unmarried, who are not obliged to please men, and who can have God alone as their Friend: "And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit."[1] And further :

That is very difficult on account of lasting so long.

[1] Et mulier innupta, et virgo cogitat quæ Domini sunt, ut sit sancta corpore, et spiritu.—I. Cor. vii. 34.

"He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God."[1] On the contrary: "But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. . . . .But she that is married, thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband."[2] And still, both must retain the favor and grace of God. Both must strive to please God, as well as husband or wife; and there are hundreds of occasions on which it is impossible to please one, without displeasing the other. And that is a fruitful source of uneasiness and trouble. But the greatest danger and difficulty in this respect is that of displeasing God, for the sake of husband or wife.

Danger, on account of living together, that one will lead the other astray.

Nothing has more power over us, for good or evil, than the example of those with whom we are in daily contact. The Holy Ghost says, by the mouth of the Prophet David: "With the holy, thou wilt be holy; and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent. And with the elect, thou wilt be elect; and with the perverse, thou wilt be perverted."[3] St. Ambrose adds: "How much more true is not that of the married state, in which two become one body and one heart?"[4] It is certainly the case that a wife's virtue and piety can do much to make her husband pious, and that the holy example of a good husband can help the wife to practise virtue, and in this sense we must understand the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband."[5] But unfortunately, experience tends mostly in the contrary direction, and proves that we are more easily inclined to evil than to good, and that married people imitate each other's vices far more readily than they do each other's virtues.

The wife imitates the husband.

A young woman who has been piously brought up, and has preserved her baptismal innocence, who always lived a retired life at home with her parents, dressed modestly and becomingly in a Christian manner, frequented the Church and often heard sermons, was a weekly communicant, and was much given to prayer,

[1] Qui sine uxore est, sollicitus est, quæ Domini sunt, quomodo placeat Deo.—I. Cor. vii. 32.

[2] Qui autem cum uxore est, sollicitus est quæ sunt mundi, quomodo placeat uxori, divisus est. . . . Quæ autem nupta est, cogitat quæ sunt mundi, quomodo placeat viro.—Ibid. 33, 34.

[3] Cum sancto sanctus eris, et cum viro innocente innocens eris. Et cum electo electus eris, et cum perverso perverteris.—Ps. xvii. 26, 27.

[4] Quanto magis in conjugio, ubi una caro et unum spiritus est?

[5] Sanctificatus est enim vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem, et sanctificata est mulier infidelis per virum fidelem.—I. Cor. vii. 14.

meditation, and mortification ; if such a one marries a man who is totally different from her as far as piety is concerned, and who is given to pride, vanity, idleness, and all sorts of vices, who seeks for nothing but sensual gratifications, and who follows all the customs of the world in his conversations and amusements ; then, indeed, an innocent lamb is given over to a ravening wolf ! For such a man will not leave his wife any time for prayer and pious practices ; he will prevent her from going often to Church and hearing sermons ; he will not allow her to fast or mortify herself ; he will compel her to dress after the vain fashion of the world ; he talks to her of nothing but frivolous, useless, and even impure subjects ; he brings her into all kinds of dangerous company ; he compels her to pay and receive many visits, and to live like a lady of fashion, etc. What a temptation is there for a pious soul ! She requires a powerful grace and help from God to preserve her innocence, piety, and tender love of God under such circumstances. For, without that help, she would soon experience a complete change in herself : the spirit of piety, which she brought to her marriage, would grow cold little by little ; she would lose her taste for spiritual things, and, following her husband's example, which she has constantly before her, she would lead an idle, vain, careless, and unchristian life.

The husband imitates the wife.

It would seem as if men were in little danger of being led away and perverted by the bad example of their wives, because they are the lords and masters and heads of their families, and besides, they have more courage and strength of mind to avoid the effects of bad example. But is that really the case? Adam in Paradise had all his inclinations under the full control of reason, and yet he was weak enough to give way to the solicitation of his wife ; a word of Eve's was enough to cajole and betray him, so that, to his own ruin and that of his posterity, he transgressed the divine command. Solomon was the wisest of all men, but he allowed women to befool him to such an extent, that he turned his back on the true God and bent the knee before idols. And after these and many other similar examples, of which the history of the world is full, can any man trust so far in his own courage and determination, as to say that he will not depart a hair's-breadth from the law of God to please his wife, no matter how much he loves her? A bad and unchristian woman is, to my mind, worse in a house than a wicked man, and, generally speaking, pious men are more frequently perverted by their wives, than pious wives are by their husbands. A wicked woman can more easily destroy

the virtues of her husband, than a pious man can reform a wicked wife. In a word, both are in danger of sinning grievously for each other's sake. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary always to have Jesus as a Friend and Helper, if the soul's salvation is to be secured. I will say nothing of the danger of other sins, such as impatience, disunion, abusive language, cursing, swearing, etc., which are occasioned by daily annoyances in the house and in business, by ill-luck and by the disobedience of children; nor do I speak of the danger of great negligence in bringing up children for their last end, by which parents often incur the loss of their own souls, and are responsible for the loss of their children's souls also.

Warning to those who think of getting married.

You who think of getting married should learn from this how careful you must be in selecting the person with whom you intend to pass your lives. Do not consider, first of all, as most people do, whether that person is rich or beautiful, or of a good family, or experienced in the world; your first question should be, is that person pious, virtuous, and well brought up; and whether you can live with that person and serve God, save your soul, and gain Heaven without difficulty. But to find one of this kind, you must, as we have seen already, pray to God for help, for a good and prudent wife is a special gift of God.[1] To deserve that gift, you must lead a virtuous life. The Wise Sirach says: "A good wife is a good portion."[2] And to whom is that portion given? "She shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds."[3] Cornelius à Lapide says: "Palatius thinks that a good wife is a sign of predestination for her husband and children."[4] But an idle, vain, wicked, and impure life is not a means of obtaining such a great favor from God.

Danger on account of the difficulty of reconciling the care of temporal things with poverty of spirit.

What shall I say of the third danger, which arises from the cares of housekeeping and providing for children? Who does not know how difficult it is to work hard for money and temporal goods, and still to remain poor in spirit, and to fulfil those two duties without exceeding in either? According to the law of the Gospel, you married people, if you neglect your housekeeping, and do not work with all possible diligence to feed your children and educate them according to your condition, will be held responsible for your negligence and will be punished for it at the judgment-seat of God. According to the law of the same Gos-

[1] A Domino proprie uxor prudens.—Prov. xix. 14.
[2] Pars bona, mulier bona.—Eccl. xxvi. 3.
[3] In parte bona timentium Deum, dabitur viro pro factis bonis.
[4] Palatius censet, bonam uxorem signum esse prædestinationis viri et filiorum.

pel, if you allow yourselves to be too much taken up with worldly things, for your children's sake, you will fall a prey to the devil and will lose your souls. These are the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "They that will become rich, fall into the snare of the devil."[1] It is not allowed for you who are in the married state, as it is for me and other unmarried persons, to follow the counsel that Jesus Christ gave to the young man who wanted to know what he must do to gain Heaven: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . .and follow me."[2] No, that perfection is not for you; if you have temporal goods, you must keep them, you must look after them carefully, and increase them by just means; but in the care, possession, and increasing of money and property, you must not allow your hearts to be attached to them. Hear what the Apostle says of this: "This, therefore, I say, brethren: It remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none."[3] They must keep their hearts and minds as free as if they were completely their own masters. "And they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not."[4] And why? Because the care that you can and must have for worldly goods, does not dispense you altogether, nor except you from the general law of Christ, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple."[5]

Which poverty is required of married people.

This law is for all, without exception: "Every one of you."[6] It was not for the Apostles alone that it was made, but for the crowd of people of all sorts who were following our Lord. The Scripture says in the same chapter: "And there went great multitudes with Him, and turning, He said to them: Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple,"[7] nor be of the number of my friends. But, as St. John Chrysostom says, we must not understand that of the real abandonment of all worldly goods, for otherwise every one would be really poor; but of the inward detachment of the heart and will; namely, that each one who possesses or works for earthly goods, must be as ready and

[1] Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in laqueum diaboli.—I. Tim. vi. 9.

[2] Vade, vende quæ habes, et da pauperibus, ... et sequere me.—Matth. xix. 21.

[3] Hoc itaque dico, fratres: reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint.—I. Cor. vii. 29.

[4] Et qui emunt tanquam non possidentes; et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—Ibid. 30, 31.

[5] Omnis ex vobis, qui non renuntiat omnibus, quæ possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus.—Luke xiv. 33.

[6] Omnis ex vobis.

[7] Ibant autem turbæ multæ cum eo, et conversus dicit ad illos: Omnis ex vobis, qui, etc.

willing to lose them, if it pleases God, as to keep and increase them; and when he is enjoying them, he must have no other intention but to fulfil the divine will in the state to which he is called. So that the Gospel law of poverty is for you, married people, as well as for me; but with this great difference, that your obligation is much more difficult and dangerous than mine, for the inward detachment from those goods, which is easy enough for me, must not hinder you from caring and working for those goods, in order to support your children and yourselves. The union of these two duties is what I call the heroic virtue of your state, and the dangerous combat of the married life.

Yet one can be good and pious amid all these dangers.

Ah, you think, is that really the case with us? How is it possible for us to save our souls and to preserve them unharmed, amid so many dangers? I give you the same answer that Jesus Himself gave to a similar question that His disciples put to Him, when He said that it is exceedingly difficult for a rich man to enter Heaven. How, they asked, in consternation: "Who then can be saved? With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."[1] For those who enter the married state without being called to it by God, or who consider temporal things alone, or who think seldom of God, go rarely to Church and to sermons, seldom receive the sacraments, and do not concern themselves about having God as their Friend, for such as these it is difficult to escape the dangers that threaten their salvation; but for pious Christians who are zealous in the service of God, and who often ask Him for help and assistance, it is quite possible, nay, even easy. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Tobias, Job, and many others in the Old Testament, as well as numbers in the New Law, were married, as you are; they had to provide for their families, as you have; they had more riches and worldly goods than you have; and yet they conquered the dangers of their state, and became great Saints in Heaven. In our days, too, there are many Christian married people who lead an upright, pious, and holy life. The more numerous and the greater are the dangers of a state, the more frequent and powerful are the helps that God gives to men, so that the dangers may be easily overcome; but He gives these helps only to His friends, who strive to please Him.

Conclusion and exhortation to the married.

Therefore I again conclude that if the marriage is to be a happy one, as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, Jesus must be with you continually, even after the wedding. And woe to you,

[1] Quis ergo poterit salvus esse? Apud homines hoc impossibile est: apud Deum autem omnia possibilia sunt.—Matth. xix. 25, 26.

married people, if Jesus abandons you, or ceases to be your Friend, or leaves you to your own unaided powers! Therefore, whatever cares you may have, whatever you do, or undertake, see first that you keep God before your eyes, and that He is your Friend; do not lose His grace and favor by mortal sin, nor make yourselves unworthy of His help and assistance by a vain and tepid life! One mortal sin would open the door to many sins, and often to eternal ruin, for it would deprive you of the friendship of God, and leave you without His help, in so many dangers. The mother leads her young child about by the hand everywhere; if she leaves him alone for a moment, he falls. Call upon the Lord by a frequent reception of the sacraments, by hearing Mass daily, if possible, and by living in the constant love and fear of God. Call upon Him as the disciples did, when they were in danger of death: "Lord, save us, we perish!"[1] Thou hast called us to this state, we are in it by Thy holy will; Thou knowest how many dangers threaten our souls daily, and that our strength is unable to overcome them. Do Thou lead and guide us by Thy fatherly help, that we may so live in this state, "and so use the goods of this life, that we may not lose eternal goods."[2] Come to sermons often, and bring your children with you, that you may receive fresh encouragement in the divine service. If you are tempted grievously, either against conjugal chastity, or against the reverence you owe to God, by an inordinate love for each other, or against patience under crosses and trials, fly at once to God for refuge. Cry out immediately: Lord, now is the time to help us, we perish.

People to keep God as their Friend.

And God will certainly keep the promise He so often made: "Ask and you shall receive."[3] He abandons no one who does not first abandon Him; He will command the stormy winds to be still, and will direct everything for your greater advantage and merit. Is God your Friend and Helper? oh, then be comforted! Then you may well say with the Prophet David: "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death"—though the greatest dangers surrounded me on all sides—"I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me,"[4] Thou art my Helper. Therefore, oh, my God, Thou shalt always remain my Friend, and I will serve Thee zealously, and perform the duties of my state exactly. Let other

And God will help them to overcome all dangers.

[1] Domine, salva nos, perimus!

[2] Et sic transeamus per bona temporalia, ut non amittamus æterna. [3] Petite et accipietis.

[4] Et si ambulavero in medio umbræ mortis, non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es.—Ps. xxii. 4.

men be my enemies, even without cause; as long as Thou, oh, Lord, art my Friend, it is all I require. My children and dear friends may get sick and die; as long as Thou remainest with me, I have consolation enough. Temporal prosperity may desert me, my income may decrease, everything in the world may turn against me, but my first care shall be to have Thee, oh, God, as my Guide and Helper, and then I shall have nothing to fear. And I, too, shall say in the same manner, with all here present, in all the dangers that threaten my soul: Lord, help us,[1] that we may not lose Thee; help us to bring our souls to Thee, in Heaven. Amen.

TWENTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IN THE MARRIED STATE IN ORDER TO HAVE TEMPORAL HAPPINESS.

Subject.

For a marriage to be happy, even as far as temporal happiness and prosperity in business are concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Qui seminavit bonum semen in agro suo.—Matth. xiii. 24.
"That sowed good seed in his field."

Introduction.

Why does He sow the seed? Doubtless because he hopes to reap a rich harvest from it. But what useless and vexatious labor it is to scatter the seed and reap no profit from it, as was the case with the man in the Parable of to-day's Gospel! He sowed good seed in his field,[2] but during the night an enemy, who envied him, came and oversowed cockle. How much unprofitable labor of this kind do we not undertake, my dear brethren! What thoughts and ideas and laborious plans have we not to make profit out of our temporal occupations! And yet most of our labor is in vain. The chief cause of this is, in my opinion, that we do not understand nor attend sufficiently to the words of St. Paul: "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the

[1] Domine, salva nos! [2] Seminavit bonum semen in agro suo.

increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."[1] So that he who plants can effect nothing, nor he who waters, but God alone who gives the increase. Such is the case, my dear brethren. If God does not help us in our business, if His influence and assistance are wanting to us, all our labor is in vain. And what wonder is it that we do not always prosper? I have proved in the last sermon, that for a marriage to be happy, as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend; now I have to show that—

Plan of Discourse.

For a marriage to be happy, even as far as temporal happiness and prosperity in business are concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend. This I will show in to-day's sermon. The subject will be a profitable one, also, for all unmarried people, who have any kind of business to do. All may learn from it that a pious life, and constant friendship with God, is useful and necessary even for temporal prosperity.

To this end may He, who alone can give spiritual increase and fruit to sermons, give us His grace, through the merits of Mary, Queen of Heaven, and the holy angels guardian.

He who wishes to build, must, with many other things, have an experienced architect.

What must he do who intends building a great edifice? What must he think of? He must provide a number of all kinds of things that will be required. He must have money, as a matter of course, or he will be able to do nothing. But money alone is not enough; besides the ground which is to form the site of the building, he must provide stones, lime, wood, iron, glass, and all kinds of tools and instruments. And is that enough? By no means: these things are merely the materials for the building; they would lie there a long time before putting themselves in order and building a house. And what is still wanting? The architect, who must first draw a plan of the house according to the intention and desire of its owner, and then instruct the masons and laborers as to how they must begin and continue their work. He is the first who must be employed, and his advice has to be taken first of all, that he may be able, according to the principles of his profession, to calculate how much stone, wood, lime, sand, iron, and what tools, and how many workmen, will be necessary for the building. If he is wanting,

[1] Ego plantavi, Apollo rigavit, sed Deus incrementum dedit. Itaque neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat: sed, qui incrementum dat, Deus.—I. Cor. iii. 6, 7.

all the other things will be useless. But there is no use in my telling you of such things; the world is prudent and wise enough in undertakings of that nature!

Many means are used to secure temporal prosperity.

My dear brethren, what is the object of temporal business in the world, especially in the married state? It is to keep the wealth that one has, to increase it by gaining what one has not, in order to clothe, feed and educate one's family, children, and one's self decently, and to preserve a good name before men. That is a laudable object, and when it is directed to our last end, in accordance with the divine will, it is meritorious of eternal life. To gain that object, men use different means: some make use of their trade or profession, others are merchants and shopkeepers, others employ their learning in legal matters, others fill public offices and employments, others are farmers, others lend their money at interest, others go to law to preserve their property, or to replace what they have lost; in a word, every one works as well as he can to live and keep his family according to his state in life. But for the office, the trade, the shop, the farm, or the law-suit to turn out successfully, what an amount of things are required! Good sense and understanding, bodily health and strength must form the foundation of the building, and these are exposed to many dangers and accidents: the influence of the heavenly bodies, the changes of worldly usages, the rise and fall of the market, heat and cold, noxious insects, and a host of other things can injure or benefit our business, and they do not at all depend on our free will. To speak only of our fellow men, we very often are in want of their advice, favor, or friendship; we require their help in business; sometimes we must try to prevent them from injuring us; in a word, we have a thousand things to take into account, to foresee, to weigh, to guard against, to fear, to love, to use, and to reject; if we make a mistake in any one of them, our business is ruined.

All these things are of no use, when the Architect, God, does not help us.

Suppose, now, that a man has all these things prepared and arranged according to his wish; what is to be done then? Has he done enough for his business to prosper? By no means; he has, so to say, nothing but the sand, lime, and stone, the mere materials and tools for the work. In addition to these, he must have an infinite wisdom to plan out the edifice, an infinite power to work at it, under the direction of infinite wisdom, if his employment, trade, business, or law-suit is to begin, continue, and end prosperously. The chief Architect is still required: I mean the great God, the Lord and Master, who rules and directs all creatures.

Without His consent, no creature can be used in the service of man; nothing will make the least movement for our advantage, until it gets the command of its Creator to do so. Without His will, no man, nor any other creature, can either do good or harm; without His help and assistance all our cares and plans, all our foresight, labor, and trouble, and all the friendship and favor of others, cannot be of the least use to us. "Except the Lord build the house," says the Psalmist David, "they labor in vain that build it."[1] The Prophet speaks here, not only of a material house of wood and stone, but rather of that which constitutes good housekeeping, namely, the temporal prosperity, happiness and good fortune of the family. You may labor and toil for this, day and night; you may strain your mind as much as you please; you may call on all men for help; if the Lord is not favorable to you, your labor is in vain: "It is in vain for you to rise before light,"[2] to seek your profit; unless the Lord helps you, and blesses your undertaking, you may plague yourself to death before you advance a foot towards prosperity.

His providence orders all things according to His will.

He is the Lord whose infallible providence rules, moves, and restrains everything in the world, when, how and where He wills. He alone can turn and direct free, rational creatures according to His pleasure, without offering any violence to their freedom. What seems farthest away, He brings in a moment; what appears nearest at hand, He removes in an instant. He alone can, in a moment, give prosperity where it is least to be hoped for, and reduce to nothing a most successful undertaking; He can restore what is lost and take away what is won; He can give hope to the most despairing, and render the most confident quite hopeless. He has in His Almighty power endless ways and means of raising the poorest to the possession of great wealth, and of reducing the richest to beggary; He can cast down the mighty, and place the lowly on thrones. But why should I say all this to Christians? Their faith teaches them that nothing can happen in the world, except sin alone, without the knowledge, will, and providence of God. "The prosperity of man," says the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Wise Ecclesiasticus, "is in the hand of God."[3] "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God."[4] Great God! eternal praise be to Thee, since Thou alone canst

[1] Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt, qui ædificant eam.—Ps. cxxvi. 1.

[2] Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere.—Ibid. 2.

[3] In manu Dei prosperitas hominis.—Eccl. x. 5.

[4] Bona et mala, vita et mors, paupertas et honestas a Dei sunt.—Ibid. xi. 14.

know, do and govern all things ; since it is on Thee alone that we must at all times fix our eyes ! How fortunate we are, to be governed by such a wise and powerful Ruler, if we are only willing that Thou shouldst govern us !

Therefore, to secure prosperity in business, God must be our Friend.

Now, my dear brethren, if it is true that countless creatures and circumstances are necessary to the success of an undertaking, if it is true that not one of these circumstances depends on our free will or energy, if it is true that God alone can dispose of them at pleasure, according to the inscrutable decrees of His providence, then, I ask you, if your temporal business is to begin and end prosperously, whatever it may be, must you not first of all have God as your Helper, and your constant Friend ? You may judge yourselves what sort of success he can hope for who neglects God, and who, living in the state of sin, is an enemy of God.

They act foolishly who neglect God in their business.

Can there be any greater folly than that which most men are guilty of, who, in their undertakings, trust solely to their own cleverness, cunning, prudence, industry, and labor, and never ask help from God, as if they stood in no need of Him ? Who ever thinks of being reconciled with God, if he is in the state of sin, or of praying to God for help, before undertaking an important business? Who is there who would obey a friend advising him to go and consult God first in such a case? There is a man, whom every one looks upon as learned and skilful, who imagines that he understands all kinds of business, and that he can foresee even the least difficulty that is likely to crop up, whose principal rule is to adopt always the safest means ; tell me, would a man of that kind, according to the usual way of the world, tell another who might ask his advice about a certain undertaking, to put his conscience in order first, and to secure the friendship of God, that his undertaking might turn out prosperously? No such thing; the last thought of such people is to ask God to help them !

They who seek prosperity by offending God.

How many are there not in the world, who try to succeed in business by means that are directly against God and His commandments, and who hope to secure prosperity by offending and insulting Him ! Such is the case with many a statesman, who prefers the wiles of diplomacy to the law of the Gospel ; with many a courtier who owes his influence and authority to his own hypocrisy and deceit ; with many a lawyer who defends unjust and hopeless cases, and ruins others for his own profit ; with many a merchant and shopkeeper who uses false weights and

measures, mixes up old and useless wares with new ones, lies and perjures himself a hundred times a day to get a higher price for his goods, and tries to lessen his neighbor, so as to deprive him of his customers; with many an innkeeper who shelters suspicious persons and tries to attract the impure to his house, and supplies drunkards with intoxicating drinks until they are completely bereft of sense; with many a laborer and journeyman who works on Sundays and holy days without necessity, and keeps part of the materials given him, without the knowledge and consent of their owner; with many a servant who robs his master; with many a daughter who dresses immodestly, frequents dangerous company and allows others to take liberties with her, that she may get married sooner; and this is the case, too, even with parents themselves, who give their daughters full freedom with regard to the opposite sex, that they may get a husband more easily.

Such people will have no prosperity.

What are we thinking of, Christians? How can we imagine that we can gain our object in that way? What has become of our reason? Can we hope to carry out our projects by the same means that we make use of to offend the great Ruler of all things, who alone has the power of distributing riches and property, prosperity and adversity, to whom, how and when He wills? Wilt Thou permit that, oh, Almighty God? Wilt Thou bless and approve of means which attack Thy honor and offend Thee? But it would be to support Thy enemies in their impiety, if they found as much profit and advantage in offending Thee, as if they served Thee faithfully and enjoyed Thy friendship. No, my dear brethren; God is still the same unchangeable Being who rules the world from the beginning, who is at all times able to upset the plans and schemes of the unrighteous, and to destroy them by their own wickedness, so that all the world may know "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord."[1]

Proved by examples from the Sacred Scriptures.

Adam in Paradise thought that by disobedience he could exalt himself and make himself like to God; and that very disobedience was the cause of unhappiness to him and his descendants. Joseph was sold by his brethren and sent to Egypt as a slave, because they feared that he would one day rule over them, and by that very means they made Joseph their ruler, and were compelled afterwards to bow down, trembling, before him. King Pharao wished to destroy the Israelites by hard treatment, fearing that they would grow too powerful for him: he oppressed them in all kinds of ways, but

[1] Quia non est sapientia, non est prudentia, non est consilium contra Dominum.—Prov. xxi. 30.

what was the result? The more he oppressed them, the more they increased, as the Holy Scripture says: "The more they oppressed them, the more they were multiplied and increased,"[1] and Pharao himself and his people found temporal and eternal death in the Red Sea, when pursuing them. Saul sought to kill David, so as to preserve the crown in his own family, but all his plans and schemes resulted only in giving David more influence among the people and in placing him sooner on the throne. The Jews, wonderful to say, thought that they would lose their city of Jerusalem and their temple, if they did not put Jesus to death; and that very crime brought upon them the evil they dreaded. "There is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel against God,"[2] no prosperity nor happiness without God!

And by experience.

Such, too, is the daily experience of the world. How many are there not who labor night and day, form all kinds of plans and schemes, spare no effort and even deny themselves the proper time for meals, in their eagerness to push on the work and finish the building, and yet their labor is wasted, and they know not why. The cause is generally sought for in the change of fortune, or in the opposition and envy of man. They exclaim, as in the Gospel of to-day: "An enemy has done this,"[3] or they attribute it to unfavorable weather, bad seasons, etc. Certainly these things are the immediate instruments by which their prosperity is hindered, and temporal loss is entailed upon them, but who is the Master who has set these instruments in motion? How do matters stand between you and God? Are you in His friendship? or have you treated Him with carelessness, and banished Him out of your consciences? If so, what wonder is it that your business does not prosper? If the architect has not the superintendence, what sort will the building be? The Lord says, by the Prophet Aggeus: "You have looked for more, and behold, it became less, and you brought it home, and I blowed it away."[4] "You have sowed much and brought in little."[5] You have made something occasionally by unjust means, and I have blown it away.[6] You thought to make some profit thereby and you have lost it and other things that you lawfully possessed along with it. "Why, saith the Lord of hosts? because my house is desolate, and

[1] Quantoque opprimebant eos, tanto magis multiplicabantur et crescebant.—Exod. i. 12.
[2] Non est sapientia, non est prudentia, non est consilium contra Dominum.
[3] Inimicus homo hoc fecit.
[4] Respexistis ad amplius, et ecce factum est minus, intulistis in domum, et exsuffiavi illud. -Agg. i. 9.
[5] Seminastis multum et intulistis parum.—Ibid. 6. [6] Et exsuffiavi illud.

you make haste, every man to his own house;"[1] that is to say, because you labor only for temporal goods, and neglect Me, and drive Me out of your hearts. "Therefore the heavens over you were stayed from giving dew, and the earth was hindered from yielding her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and upon all that the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon beasts, and upon all the labor of the hands,"[2] that it may profit nothing. And how can it be otherwise? Are not hunger, thirst, poverty, war, sickness and scarcity the effects of sin alone, as the Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "Death and bloodshed, strife and the sword, oppressions, famine, and affliction and scourges, all these things are created for the wicked."[3] How can we imagine, then, that sin, or the state of sin, can help us to temporal prosperity?

Even the heathens knew that.

I am ashamed, I must confess, to have to declare this truth to a Christian congregation, since even the heathens knew that there was no happiness nor prosperity to be expected without the help of their gods; nay, even the light of reason told them that if the true believers were not in the friendship of the true God, they could not but be unfortunate. "Search," said Achior to Holofernes, when the latter wished to oppress the Jews in Bethulia, "if there be any iniquity of theirs in the sight of their God."[4] See whether they have not offended Him by some grievous sin. "Let us go up to them, because their God will surely deliver them to thee, and they shall be brought under the yoke of thy power; but if there be no offence of this people in the sight of their God, we cannot resist them; because their God will defend them, and we shall be a reproach to the whole earth."[5] In one word, my dear brethren, God is the Dispenser of all happiness; He it is who gives His blessing to those who are in His friendship, and therefore, if we wish to be happy, we must have God as our Friend. So that they labor in vain who neglect this Architect, and think they can finish their business satisfactorily without His help.

[1] Quam ob causam? dicit Dominus exercituum. Quia domus mea deserta est, et vos festinastis unusquisque in domum suam.—Agg. i. 9.

[2] Propter hoc super vos prohibiti sunt cœli, ne darent rorem; et terra prohibita est, ne daret germen suum. Et vocavi siccitatem super terram, super montes, et super triticum, et super vinum, et super oleum, et quæcumque profert humus, et super homines, et super jumenta, et super omnem laborem manuum.—Ibid. 10, 11.

[3] Mors, sanguis, contentio, gladius, oppressiones, fames et contritio et flagella super iniquos creata sunt.—Eccl. xl. 9, 10.

[4] Perquire! Perquire, si est aliqua iniquitas eorum in conspectu Dei eorum.—Jud. v. 24.

[5] Ascendamus ad illos, quoniam tradens tradet illos Deus eorum tibi, et subjugati erunt sub jugo potentiæ tuæ: si vero non est offensio populi hujus coram Deo suo, non poterimus resistere illis: quoniam Deus eorum defendet illos, et erimus in opprobrium universæ terræ.—Ibid. 25.

Not injustice, as many think, but a pious life brings prosperity.

But, you will say, perhaps, we must believe our eyes, we see and hear the contrary nowadays in the world. We know that, generally speaking, wickedness and temporal prosperity go together; many a one grows rich and amasses a fortune by usury and injustice, by scheming, lying, and deceiving, while on the other hand, the man who tries to be honest in his business, and to live a pious, God-fearing and Christian life, in all simplicity and without having any recourse to worldly trickery, is generally behindhand and makes little profit. And that is the reason why many murmur and complain against divine providence, as if God did not rule the affairs of the world properly. They say with the Prophet Jeremias: "Thou, indeed, oh, Lord, art just, if I plead with Thee, but yet I will speak what is just to Thee: Why doth the way of the wicked prosper; why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root; they prosper and bring forth fruit."[1] Must we conclude, then, that temporal prosperity depends little on the friendship of God, but very much on injustice and wickedness? But what an unchristian thing to say! In the first place, it is not true that temporal prosperity always accompanies wickedness, as I could easily prove by bringing forward examples from the Sacred Writings, of pious and God-fearing men on the one hand, and of wicked and impious men on the other, from the very beginning of the world. We should find that the incomparably greater number attained prosperity by being virtuous. But the prosperity of the wicked, since it is of very rare occurrence, attracts more attention.

Proved from the Sacred Scriptures.

Go through the whole of the Scriptures, which contain the infallible Word of God, and therefore cannot be doubted without blasphemy, and if you find any examples therein of people who were specially helped and protected by God in their necessities, and endowed with worldly wealth, then I will show you that they were, generally speaking, pious and holy servants of God. Achior, whom I have already mentioned, says that such was the case with the whole Jewish nation: "As long as they sinned not in the sight of their God, it was well with them."[2] "There was no one that triumphed over this people but when they departed from the worship of the Lord their God."[3] The Wise Man says

[1] Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum, verumtamen justa loquar ad te. Quare via impiorum prosperatur? Bene est omnibus, qui prævaricantur et inique agunt. Plantasti eos, et radicem miserunt; proficiunt et faciunt fructum.—Jerem. xii. 1, 2.

[2] Usquedum non peccarent in conspectu Dei sui, erant cum illis bona.—Jud. v. 21.

[3] Non fuit, qui insultaret populo isti, nisi quando recessit a cultu Domini Dei sui.—Ibid. ix.

even of heathen peoples: "Justice exalteth a nation."[1] But if, on the other hand, you find a still greater number of people who were overwhelmed with misfortunes, temporal chastisement, and adversity, then I will show you that all these punishments were inflicted on them solely on account of their sins, and because they left God. The Wise Man says, in the same chapter: "Sin maketh nations miserable."[2] The Prophet Isaias writes of the wicked: "Their webs shall not be for clothing, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are unprofitable works. . . . their thoughts are unprofitable thoughts;" and what besides? "wasting and destruction are in their ways."[3]

The happiness even of the wicked comes from works of virtue.

In spite of all this, granted even that the wicked are generally more prosperous and fortunate in temporal things than the pious; what follows? Are we to conclude that prosperity is little helped by friendship with God? or that sin, injustice, and impiety are a good means of gaining temporal happiness? By no means; that does not follow at all; the conclusion, as students say, does not follow from the premises. Now, do you know where the fault of the argument lies? Worldly prudence imagines that the wicked have gained their high position or their great riches by their sins and acts of injustice; but I say distinctly that such is not the case; and I maintain, on the contrary, that their prosperity is an effect and a reward of the good and virtuous works that they did when in the state of grace, or of the good and praiseworthy actions that they still occasionally perform. God is so just that as He does not allow the least sin to go unpunished, so neither does He permit the least good act to remain unrewarded. He is so generous that, although the merit of a good work is lost by mortal sin, and they who are in the state of sin are worth nothing, and are dead for all eternity, yet He gives them a reward, that no one may be able to reproach Him, hereafter, for not having acknowledged the service rendered Him. On this account He often allows the wicked to carry on their business by unjust means, and thus to attain prosperity according to their desire, because He foresees their eternal damnation in the next world, and wishes to repay them for the good they have done, at least in this life, as St. Augustine says with regard to infidels and heathens, who were blessed with greater temporal prosperity, in proportion as they showed more signs of moral virtues and natural good works.

[1] Justitia elevat gentes.—Prov. xiv. 34. [2] Miseros autem facit populos peccatum.—Ibid.

[3] Telæ eorum non erunt in vestimentum, neque operientur operibus suis: opera eorum opera inutilia. . . . cogitationes eorum cogitationes inutiles; vastitas et contritio in viis eorum. —Isai. lix. 6, 7.

Therefore we must always keep in the friendship of God.

You see now, my dear brethren, that the objection brought forward against my statement, does not invalidate, but rather confirms it; that, namely, all happiness and prosperity in temporal things come from virtue and piety, for even the hated enemies of God, whose good works cannot merit Heaven, are rewarded for them in this life. But I do not care for such rewards: they are only the crumbs that the Lord lets fall from His table and which even the dogs may eat. He throws them out of His heavenly palace, that the wicked may enjoy them for a short time here on earth, before their souls enter eternity to suffer hunger and thirst, and learn, when it is too late, the meaning of the question: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world," and by that gain, "suffer the loss of his immortal soul?"[1] Therefore, let worldlings say what they will, I agree with the pious Mathathias, who was promised great honors and riches if he obeyed the wicked law of King Antiochus. The king's officers said to him: "Obey the king's commandment, as all the nations have done, and the men of Juda. . . . and thou, and thy sons shall be in the number of the king's friends, and enriched with gold, and silver, and many presents. Then Mathathias answered and said with a loud voice: Although all nations obey King Antiochus, so as to depart every man from the service of the law of his fathers, and consent to his commandments; I and my sons and my brethren will obey the law of our fathers. God be merciful unto us; it is not profitable for us to forsake the law and the justices of God."[2] May He keep us from doing such a foolish thing! And the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul should have still more force with Christians. He says, writing to his disciple Timothy: "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."[3]

How we are to behave with regard to God, in our business.

Therefore, I conclude as I have begun: do you wish, Christian married people, and all of you, my dear brethren, according to your different states, to perform your worldly business prudently, so as to profit by it? Then, first of all, you must be in the favor and grace of God. Do not be so foolish as to think that he who has

[1] Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?—Matth. xvi. 26.

[2] Fac jussum regis, sicut fecerunt omnes gentes et viri Juda . . . et eris tu, et filii tui inter amicos regis, et amplificatus auro et argento, et muneribus multis. Et respondit Mathathias, et dixit magna voce: Etsi omnes gentes regi Antiocho obediunt, ut discedat unusquisque a servitute legis patrum suorum, et consentiant mandatis ejus: ego et filii mei, et fratres mei obediemus legi patrum nostrorum. Propitius sit nobis Deus! non est nobis utile relinquere legem et justitias Dei.—I. Mach. ii. 18-21.

[3] Pietas ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitæ, quæ nunc est, et futuræ.—I. Tim. iv. 8.

lost God, the Supreme Good, can gain anything thereby. What profit or advantage can he hope for from all his labor and trouble, as long as he has such a powerful Enemy against him, as long as he is hated by Him from whom all blessings must come? Therefore, never begin an important business without first making sure of having God on your side. For instance, you are about to go on a journey, or to enter into partnership in business, or to try to get possession of some property, office, or employment; you are asked to carry on a lawsuit, or you must go to law to defend yourself; you are about to settle one of your children in life, either by marriage or otherwise. Whatever you are about to do, first of all take counsel with God, and if your conscience reproaches you with anything, go to confession and tell your sins; trust no one, fear all, until you are as certain as you can be that you are in the grace of God, and that you can count upon His help and assistance. If you do that you will have accomplished the most important part of your business, and may confidently make use of all lawful means to finish it, in such a way, however, that you do not trust to them so much as to God. They must be used as instruments or tools which might serve to destroy as well as to build up. The Supreme Architect must arrange everything, if any advantage is to be derived. If He keeps away from the work, then you have only built upon sand, and your labor is in vain.

Natural means will then be used to secure prosperity.

Oh, if only the fourth part of all your labor and trouble and planning were thus directed to God, how much more successful would you not be! We think, sometimes, day and night upon some matter of business; that is right and necessary; but if we devoted but half an hour of the time to prayer, or to hearing Mass, that prayer and Mass, although they have apparently little to do with our business, would certainly help more to success than all our wearisome thinking. Very often you are obliged to seek friends and patrons to help you, and speak for you; do so, in God's name; it cannot be helped; but do not forget to gain over to your side the Saints in Heaven, the Blessed Virgin and your angel guardian. They will speak to God for you, and you may take my word for it that they will be able to make those men, whose help you think you require, inclined to assist you. In order to gain friends and patrons, you must make several visits, and offer them a most respectful attention. That is quite right; but do not forget also to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and you will find that the visits you pay to men will have more fruit. You must, sometimes, in order to gain your end more quick

ly, give presents here and there; that also you may do, as long as you are not giving against the law of God; but you should try also to bribe Christ our Lord; give something to the poor and suffering, in whose persons Jesus comes to your door; make some offering for the poor souls in purgatory, and you may say that I told you that such presents will be of greater help to you than any others. In a word, keep in the friendship of God, and say confidently with the Psalmist David: "My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."[1] He builds well, who is helped by God.

Proved by an example.

Our Father Paul Barry, in his book called the Holy Year, relates an interesting story in proof of this, and he gives it in the very words of the person concerned: "My father," so the story commences, "who was rich in wealth as he was generous towards the poor, showed me once his whole stock of ready money, and said to me: 'My son, tell me truly what you think, which would you rather have me do? Leave you all this money, as it is for your inheritance, or give it in trust for you to Jesus Christ?' 'Oh, father,' I answered, 'no one is to be preferred to Christ; I would rather have Him, for I might lose the money, but Christ will be my constant, true, and eternal Friend.' My father then gave almost all the money to the poor, and left me but a small sum at his death; so that poverty itself has taught me to place my greatest hopes in Jesus Christ as my Guardian; and I have not been deceived. For, amongst the most respectable citizens, there was one who had a very virtuous wife and an only daughter; the mother said one day to her husband: 'We have an only daughter, and are very rich; what sort of a husband shall we seek for her? If she marries a rich man who is not a man of sense and honor, she will have a miserable and unhappy life; let us rather seek for a pious, modest man, who will love her for her own sake, and not for her money.' 'You are right,' said the husband; 'if our daughter marries one as rich as she is herself, they will both wish to become great people, and will get too proud and haughty, and if her husband is richer than she, he will lord it over her, and she will be his servant; the best thing we can do is to select a good and virtuous husband for her, although he may not have much of the world's wealth. Above all, we must ask God to help us to find one of that kind. Do you go to church early in the morning, and ask God for light and help to this end; perhaps the first person you will see coming into the church will be the

[1] Auxilium meum a Domino, qui fecit cœlum et terram.—Ps. cxx. 2.

man we are looking for ; because it is a good sign of piety to see one going early to church.' The wife obeyed, and while she was praying, I entered the church before any one else. I was immediately asked all about my family, training, and character. I told everything candidly ; how my father was a rich man who, with my consent, had made himself poor through charity, and had left me Christ as my Guardian. On hearing this they thanked divine providence, and gave me their daughter to wife with a rich dowry." All you married people, and you who intend to marry, should learn from this what should be your first care in selecting a partner for life, namely, to see whether the object of your choice is pious and virtuous ; and also that piety is the best dowry. Learn, too, to be careful in training your children to virtue and piety. You will do very well, indeed, for your children, if you leave them the fear of God as their inheritance, and Jesus Christ as their Guardian. And finally, learn all of you what I wished to prove, namely, that the fear and love of God are the surest way even to temporal prosperity. He builds well who is helped by God.

Conclusion and resolution to remain in the friendship of God.

Such is the case, O my Lord and my God ! Would that I had never lost sight of it ! I must acknowledge, to my shame, that in all my temporal business I thought of nothing less than of Thee and Thy friendship. Months and years have I spent away from Thee, in the state of sin ; and now I know why things did not prosper with me. I have carefully collected sand and stone, when I depended so much on the help of men ; but I neglected Thee who art the only Architect ! I have sown the seed in my field, but have reaped nothing from it, because I have forgotten Thee who alone canst give the increase ! Yes, I have been acting foolishly ! I have tried to succeed by offending Thee and by acting unjustly, as if I could not prosper until I had made Thee my Enemy ! I confess my folly ! I shall never more be guilty of it ! I shall always, O God, keep in Thy friendship ; Thy help and assistance shall I seek first of all in everything I undertake. Even if I could find prosperity here on earth without Thee, I should still be afraid that it would be the only reward for my whole life, and that there would be nothing to expect in the next life but eternal misery. Oh, no ; I do not want such prosperity ! As long as I have Thy friendship, although everything else should go wrong with me, I have prosperity enough, for I then have my Supreme Good, and my conscience tells me that I am Thy friend and will remain so for eternity. This is all I ask and desire ! Christians, keep in the friendship of God ! Amen.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF MARRIED PEOPLE TOWARD EACH OTHER.

THIRTIETH SERMON.

ON THE LOVE OF MARRIED PEOPLE FOR, AND THEIR UNITY WITH EACH OTHER.

Subject.

The married state,—1st. Where there is constant love and unity, is a state that is happy and pleasing to God. 2d. Where love and unity are wanting, it is a miserable and an unhappy state. —*Preached on the third Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Omne regnum, in seipsum divisum, desolabitur.—Luke xi. 17. "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation."

Introduction.

With this one objection, Christ refuted the envious Pharisees, and showed that He did not drive out devils in the name of the devil, as they calumniously asserted: "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation."[1] If one devil drove another out of a possessed person, then they would divide their own kingdom against itself; a thing they certainly would not think of doing. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have shown how young people are to take counsel, and how they are to follow the divine vocation when embracing the religious or the unmarried state. I have also, in four consecutive sermons, treated of the sanctity and dignity of marriage, as a sacrament instituted by Christ; when I spoke of how one should prepare himself for it, if the marriage is to be a happy one, by inviting Jesus to, and securing His presence at the wedding, and keeping always in His friendship, thus making certain of eternal as well as temporal happiness. There are still some obligations of married people to be explained, to which I barely alluded in previous sermons; this I shall now undertake to do for your instruction and consolation, and that young people

[1] Omne regnum in seipsum divisum, desolabitur.

who think of marrying, may know what sort of a state they are about to embrace. The first and most necessary obligation of married people, is suggested by the text: "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation;"[1] namely, that there must be constant love and unity between them; and I shall show in different sermons how that unity may be preserved. I begin, therefore, to-day and say—

Plan of Discourse.

The married state, where there is constant love and unity, is a state that is happy and pleasing to God. Such will be the first part. Where love and unity are wanting, it is a miserable and an unhappy state. The second part. Therefore, married Christians, above all, be united and love each other. The conclusion.

O God of peace, give Thy grace to all married people to this end, through the intercession of Thy beloved Mother Mary, and the angels of peace.

The happiness of everything consists in the unity and harmony of all its parts.

The quiet, peace, and union of a state or community consists in the perfect harmony and uniformity of its various members, so that inferiors are subject to superiors, and each one does what his duty or office requires of him, and all live on good terms with each other. This union and harmony makes a state happy and prosperous, while without it there can be no regular government, and there will be nothing but confusion, disunion, and uneasiness. Experience teaches us also, with regard to all created things, that they find their greatest strength in union. The light of the stars is very beautiful, as long as they keep in their proper spheres, but if a star gets out of its place, or the moon comes too near the sun, darkness and confusion are the result. There are many magnificent buildings to be seen, but their magnificence depends on the union and harmony of their parts: if one of these parts is wanting, the whole edifice falls in ruins. It is very agreeable to hear good music played on fine instruments, as long as the latter are well tuned, but if there is the slightest discord the music is completely spoiled.

St. Paul points to the human body as a wonderful instance of the divine power, but in what does its stature, beauty, and health consist? In the union and just proportion of its members. If these latter commenced to quarrel with each other, or to be dissatisfied with their respective positions; if the hands wished to

[1] Omne regnum in seipsum divisum, desolabitur.

take the place of the eyes, and the feet that of the hands, or if the mouth desired to be raised as high as the forehead, what a monster would not man become? The same may be said of a country, town, or community, in which many individuals must live together. It will be a happy and joyful society, if every one is contented with the duty and position assigned to him, and lives in peace and love with those around him. But if this unity is wanting, there is nothing but quarrels, divisions and dissensions between inferiors and superiors, as well as between equals among themselves. "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation." What a distracted and desolate kingdom!

Hence the first care of rulers is to establish peace and unity among their subjects.

Therefore rulers make it their first care to preserve peace and unity amongst their subjects, for on that depends the prosperity of the whole country. The Emperor Basilius has left us a noteworthy example of this: when the Eastern Church was suffering from the schism of Photius, the emperor spoke the following beautiful words in presence of the bishops assembled in Council at Constantinople: "I appear in person before you, prostrate myself on the ground, and lay down my crown and sceptre at your feet! Come, then, without fear, and trample on the greatest monarch, set your feet on the head that divine providence has adorned with an imperial crown! I willingly expose myself to shame, disgrace, and insult, if by that means you may be again united, and peace be restored to the Church." St. Gregory Nazianzen acted in the same way, as we read in his Life, for when on one occasion a great number of bishops were assembled in the same city, and could not agree about electing a Patriarch of Constantinople, he adjured them by the Most Blessed Trinity, not to be disunited, and added that, if he were a cause of disagreement to them, they should treat him like the Prophet Jonas: "Throw me," he said, "into the sea, that the storm may be stilled, and the bark of Peter may be at rest. I will readily agree to all that you may wish to do with me: depose me from my office, banish me from the city, I will be satisfied, if peace and quiet cannot otherwise be secured. All I ask of you is to do your utmost to secure union and harmony."

The married state is indeed a small community, but for that reason

Married Christians, if a country or town is a large family and community, your state is also a community on a small scale. The former consists of many individuals, yours only of two, the husband and wife: but for that very reason, if your state is to be happy, peace and unity are all the more necessary for you; for, if quar-

rels and dissensions arise in a large community, where there are many individuals, at least every one is not my enemy, and I can have my own friends to support and console me, so that I may avoid those who dislike me, and keep out of their way, and thus enjoy a certain amount of peace and quiet. But when two persons make up the whole community, and these two are united by a bond that death alone can dissolve, and are bound to spend their lives together, to be always in each other's company, and to keep all their affection and love for each other, how could they find peace, consolation or joy, if they were given to quarrelling and dissensions? So that almost all their peace and happiness consists in mutual love and unity, inasmuch as one is duly submissive to the other, and readily and willingly performs the duties imposed on him or her by God, while both agree by word and work in their opinions and inclinations, and have one mind, one soul, one heart, as our Lord says, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, speaking of married people: "Therefore, now they are not two, but one flesh,"[1] and one individual, as far as mind, spirit, and heart are concerned.

peace and unity are more necessary to it.

Oh, certainly, that state is pleasing to God and man, and happy and desirable to the married couple, when man and wife thus live in constant peace and harmony! The Lord says, by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men."[2] And what are these things? "The concord of brethren, and the love of neighbors, and man and wife that agree well together."[3] Nor is it any wonder that God has such pleasure therein, since He says of Himself, that He is a God of peace,[4] and recognizes as His children those who live peacefully together: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."[5] St. Peter Chrysologus says: "God dwells in peace."[6] Hence it follows that married people, who live in peace and concord, possess God Himself, and have Him dwelling in their hearts. And what a fine opportunity they have of serving God by that mutual harmony and good understanding in the exact fulfilment of the duties of their state, without which peace cannot long subsist! What an edifying example may they not give their children and servants, by never uttering the least

Where this unity rules, the state is a happy one, and pleasing to God.

[1] Itaque jam non sunt duo, sed una caro.—Matth. xix. 6.
[2] In tribus placitum est spiritui meo, quæ sunt probata coram Deo et hominibus.—Eccl. xxv. 1.
[3] Concordia fratrum, amor proximi, vir et mulier sibi bene consentientes.—Ibid. 2.
[4] Deus pacis. [5] Beati pacifici, quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur.—Matth. v. 9.
[6] Deus semper in pace est.

word of contradiction, abuse, or contempt! How powerfully they may incite their neighbors and acquaintances to follow their example, when people say of them that they are indeed a happy couple, and as united as if they were angels.

A happy state, especially for the married couple.

But the married couple themselves derive the greatest happiness and profit therefrom, even as far as this life is concerned, for there must be prosperity and grace in their house. Just as peace causes the prosperity of a whole country, says St. John Chrysostom, so love and unity between man and wife are the source of all blessings. "Union makes small things great," says the proverb; "while disunion makes great things small."[1] "A threefold cord is not easily broken,"[2] says the Wise Preacher. Plutarch tells a story of a wise father who, on the approach of death, called his sons together to exhort them, for the last time, to be united with each other. He ordered a bundle of sticks to be brought in, and said to his children: Try, now, if any one of you is strong enough to break this bundle in two. They all tried, but none of them succeeded; he then caused the bundle to be untied, and gave them the sticks to break, one by one; this they had no difficulty in doing. See, now, my children, said the father, what unity can do. I leave you great riches after my death; if you wish to keep and increase them, you must be united with each other in the bonds of fraternal affection. If you disagree and quarrel, your wealth will soon be dissipated. "A threefold cord is not easily broken." By the threefold cord the Hebrews understood the bond of marriage, which unites three kinds of persons together—the husband, the wife, and the children; the closer the union of hearts and minds among these three, the greater will be their happiness and prosperity.

They can console each other in adversity.

And what could disturb the happiness and peace of married people who love each other and live well together? I know that they have many difficulties, annoyances, and trials to contend with daily. Sometimes the children are ill-behaved, or grow sick, or the favorite child dies an untimely death; sometimes the servants are unfaithful, unruly, or lazy; the neighbors may be envious and deceitful, so that there is no peace with them; or God may allow misfortune, losses, and want to come upon the family. But if the married couple live in peace and love with each other, all these trials lose their bitterness, and half the burden is taken away from them; one consoles the other, and they share each other's

[1] Concordia parvæ res crescunt, discordia maximæ dilabuntur.

[2] Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.—Eccl. iv. 12.

joys and sorrows. Elcana said to his wife, to console her when she was afflicted on account of her barrenness: "Anna, why weepest thou? And why dost thou not eat? And why dost thou afflict thy heart? Am I not better to thee than ten children?"[1] Oh, fortunate state, I repeat, which, instituted by God, is maintained in constant love and unity! It is the household of which the Lord prophesies: "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace!"[2] A household which resembles the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the house of peace, whose inhabitants are "the angels of peace;"[3] it is that dwelling which we wish to the departed in the prayer: "May they rest in peace."[4]

Hence the devil tries in every way to disturb this unity.

But alas, how many can with truth boast of this? How rare such a marriage nowadays! When the first few years of wedded life are over, if for a wonder unity lasts so long, what a great change then takes place with many! The devil, the sworn enemy of peace, seizes holds of every opportunity to sow the seeds of discord. Sometimes he makes use of an obstinate, vain, idle, impatient, peevish, and disobedient wife, to torment the poor husband, at other times he makes the wife miserable by means of a savage, passionate, ill-tempered, and drunken husband, or he incites some scandal-monger to stir up dissensions between husband and wife by his wicked tongue. Now, on such occasions, if there is not Christian virtue, mildness, and patience on both sides, and if neither wishes to give in to the other, what will be the result? Certainly unhappiness and misery; as we shall see in the

Second Part.

The misery of that state is like hell.

Hell is an accursed place, where discord reigns supreme and the damned, hating each other like deadly enemies, spend a long eternity in howling, cursing and blaspheming, while they torture each other mutually. "Where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth,"[5] says the Prophet Job.

See, my dear brethren, what a fearful picture I make to myself of the married state, when man and wife live in strife and discord continually. And I say continually, because it is a common thing for married people to be vexed with each other now and then, even for half a day, so that one will not speak to the other—and that is particularly the case in the first years of wedded life—it

[1] Anna, cur fles, et quare non comedis, et quam ob rem affligitur cor tuum? Numquid non ego melior tibi sum, quam decem filii?—I. Kings i. 8.

[2] Sedebit populus meus in pulchritudine pacis.—Isai. xxxii. 18.

[3] Angeli pacis. [4] Requiescant in pace.

[5] Ubi nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror habitat.—Job x. 22.

may happen to those who are very fond of each other, nay, excessive love is often the cause of it. Meanwhile, they must acknowledge that, although their quarrel is only trifling and by no means serious, yet it causes them bitter sorrow, so that each awaits the end of it with impatience, and is quite glad to make matters right again, so as to put an end to the uneasiness and torment. If they had to live continually on such bad terms with each other, what would you think of it, married Christians who love each other? Would it not be an intolerable trial? From this you may see what a happiness it is for married people to be on good terms with each other, and what a misery it is if even the least misunderstanding comes between them. What a torment must it not then be when, not love, but hatred and dislike are the cause of disunion, when this disunion lasts, not for one or two days, but for the greater part of one's life, and is not confined to mere pouting and pettishness, but gives rise to continual quarrels, abuse, cursing, and swearing? What the husband likes, the wife detests; she wants one thing, he another; one ridicules the other's lowly birth, or poverty, or other natural defect; there is a constant storm of abuse going on on both sides: Would that I had never seen you! I wish you were dead, so that I might be rid of you! Alas, I need not tell you much about it; experience has taught you more than enough on this point! What a misery it must be when things have gone so far that curses and abuse lead daily to blows and ill-usage, so that the unfortunate couple live like cat and dog together? Who can sufficiently explain the wretchedness of such a state? Is it not a kind of hell to have to live thus in the same house and to live together till death?

Explained by a simile.

In former times the demon inspired the tyrant Maxentius with the cruel idea of chaining a living man to a dead body until the insupportable stench should make life impossible. What more terrible torture could be thought of? The bare idea of it horrifies us: to rot away gradually, along with a putrefying corpse, is indeed a terrible thing, and is something like the stench which makes the bodies of the reprobate in hell a torment to each other. And it is a picture, too, of the married state, when two persons who are bound to live together till death, hate and detest each other. Hence come those despairing sighs that are so often heard: Oh, unhappy me, when shall I be released? When may I hope for freedom? Wherever I turn, I find nothing but contradictions; everything is against me; every word I hear is an imprecation; everything I taste is gall; everything I feel is a thorn in my side!

I cannot have one hour's peace! A hard case, indeed, my dear brethren; and yet it is the least of the miseries caused by discord amongst married people.

Hence arise countless sins.

What a countless number of sins arise from this discord, to increase the torments of the eternal hell, when this temporal hell is at an end! I could weep tears of blood when I think of it, partly through pity for so many souls who are thus ruined forever, partly through sorrow at the many insults that are thus daily offered to God. For, from this discord comes distraction, inasmuch as the wife speaks ill of the husband, and the husband of the wife, through hatred and desire of revenge, and they try to ruin each other's character amongst neighbors, friends, and acquaintances, by their constant complaints and fault-finding. Hence arises the danger of adultery and other shameless crimes. Hence comes the secret joy and satisfaction at the misfortunes of another, as well as the deliberate desire with which one wishes the death of the other, and even the desperate resolve that suggests suicide as the best means of putting an end to a misery that makes the unfortunate people curse the day on which they were born, and the day on which they entered the married state. When this discord rules supreme, housekeeping is neglected, the husband tries to forget his sorrow by frequenting drinking houses, and spending the little he has left in gambling and debauchery; the wife, through revenge or desperation, sits idly at home and allows everything to go to ruin, or takes to gambling and drinking to be revenged on her husband. What a fearful number of sins are thus committed!

Others are also led into sin, and to eternal damnation thereby.

In such a household the children are not looked after, and they learn nothing good. And how could they? What good could they hope to learn in such an accursed school, which resembles hell itself, where children hear nothing from their parents but cursing and swearing, and see nothing but quarrelling and fighting? They will learn, indeed, but it will be to speak and act as their parents do; they will learn to behave to each other as they see their parents behaving; they will learn, when they grow up, to treat their father and mother with no greater respect than the latter show each other; they will learn to lead a wicked, good-for-nothing life, and to bring up their own children as they themselves were brought up. In that way the want of unity among married people brings, not only themselves, but also their children, and often their children's children, to eternal ruin. And what a wretched example they give to their servants, and to the whole

neighborhood, which they disturb by their quarrelling and fighting? This, too, is often the cause that, to the great scandal of the community, the husband and wife must be separated, as far as cohabitation is concerned, by ecclesiastical authority, or, what is still worse, that they separate on their own authority, which they have no right to do, in order to escape an insupportable trial. Where there is such a spirit of discord, what must become of the service of God and the salvation of the soul? The continual quarrelling and bitterness prevent the morning and evening prayer; they are not capable of hearing Mass on days of obligation or of going to sermons as they ought; almost all their confessions and communions are sacrilegious and only add to their sins, because they will not give up the hatred and ill-will they bear to each other, nor will they consent to give in to one another, or to pardon each other from their hearts. And what have they then to look forward to but hell for all eternity, of which they have a foretaste already on earth? And there their lot will be to curse each other forever, after having lived in discord during their lives on earth. Oh, miserable indeed is the married state when peace and unity are wanting!

That misery is caused in different ways, even before marriage.

The foundation of this misery is laid (attend to this, Christian sons and daughters!) either by two people of different birth and standing thoughtlessly getting married, when, as is generally the case, the one who is of humble birth is looked down upon by the other, after the first and often inordinate love has cooled down, and thus the seeds of discord are planted; or, as often happens, when parents force their children, or persuade them to marry a certain person against their will. It is an old saying that an oath taken under pressure of necessity, is offensive to God: now, where there is no love nor affection, what else can come of it but hatred, discord, and ill-will? This misery is caused, also, by marrying a person, not for virtue's sake, but for riches or honors. In such a case, if the riches are less than they were first thought to be, if adversity comes on, there is an end to love, and discontent takes its place. Children, too, cause themselves misery by marrying without the knowledge and consent of their parents, or what is worse, by embracing the first opportunity of marriage without first consulting God, to know whether He calls them to that state; or by making use of unjust means to get married, and thus receiving the sacrament in the state of mortal sin; or, as is, alas! only too common amongst those who are en-

gaged, by committing sins of impurity with each other before marriage. In all these circumstances, since they neglect God and offend Him when entering in what is in itself a holy state, what wonder is it that He does not bless them afterwards? What wonder is it that He refuses to give them the special graces which He has prepared for those who enter the married state according to His vocation and in His fear and love? And is it surprising, then, that, in the difficulties to which the married life is exposed, they should quarrel, fight, and be at variance with each other, and thus make for themselves a hell on earth, through their want of virtue?

Conclusion and exhortation to those about to marry.

Therefore, Christian sons and daughters who intend embracing the married state, see first of all whether God really calls you to that state, and then be careful to enter on it in a holy manner and for a holy object, that it may not turn out unhappily for you, which may God avert, as a punishment for your sins.

To those who do not live peacefully in the married state.

But you, unfortunate married people, who live in discord, oh, how I pity you! For God's sake put an end to your misery at once! If you have grievously offended God before, or at the time of your marriage, learn to bear your cross with humility, knowing that you well deserve it, and ought to bear it with patience. Say often to God with the elder Tobias, when he was reproached and mocked by his wife in his blindness: "Then Tobias sighed," says the Holy Scripture, "and began to pray with tears, saying: Thou art just, O Lord, and all Thy judgments are just, and all Thy ways are mercy, and truth, and judgment. And now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offences; for we have not obeyed Thy commandments, and therefore are we delivered to spoil, and to captivity, and death; and now, O Lord, do with me according to Thy will."[1] So also, I say, must you, married people, cry out in your daily crosses: "Thou art just, O Lord,"[2] and Thy judgment is right; Thou knowest how I, alas! have acted towards Thee before, and at the time of my marriage! I acknowledge that I have deserved this cross a thousand times; do with me according to Thy

[1] Tunc Tobias ingemuit, et cœpit orare cum lacrimis, dicens: Justus es Domine, et omnia judicia tua justa sunt, et omnes viæ tuæ misericordia, et veritas et judicium. Et nunc Domine, memor esto mei, et ne vindictam sumas de peccatis meis, neque reminiscaris delicta mea. Quoniam non obedivimus præceptis tuis, ideo traditi sumus in direptionem et captivitatem et mortem. Et nunc Domine secundum voluntatem tuam fac mecum.—Tob. iii. 1-6.

[2] Justus es, Domine.

will, to which I now willingly resign myself; only give me patience and meekness to bear this heavy cross, which I so well deserve, as an atonement for my sins, and to bear it to the end for the sake of my soul's salvation. Whatever has been the cause of discord to you, learn to give way to each other, to curb your anger, to forgive from your hearts, and to beg of God by earnest prayer to restore peace and harmony to you. Do you know what you must do? Go both of you and make a general confession, at least of that part of your lives which you have spent in discord; do not forget to accuse yourselves of all the confessions and communions that you made while in that state, for they may have all been bad, on account of the want of true sorrow and purpose of amendment, since there was no sign of improvement in you after them, and then take each other's hand and renew your consent to your marriage. You must also ask each other's pardon for the many injuries and annoyances you have mutually caused, and make a firm resolution to forget the past, and to love each other truly, as if you were just married; with this resolution go to the table of the Lord, and humbly ask your Lord and God, who is present within you, to ratify your resolution and to keep you united in love until death. Follow my advice, if you do not wish to go from a temporal to an eternal hell!

To other married people.

I pray and exhort all other married people, in the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians: Dear Christians, "be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace; one body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling,"[1] in which you must be one heart and one body. Remember that you must live together till death, and have a great desire of seeing each other in Heaven. If some little misunderstanding comes between you now and then, as must be the case in every family, "Let not the sun go down upon your anger,"[2] before you are reconciled with each other in the Lord. Fear and love your God: for every love that is not founded on the love of God, is a carnal and natural love, which is very changeable and cannot last long: but if you love each other because it is God's will, then no accident, nor old age, nor ill-humor, nor suffering, nor trial, will disturb your love. Pray also daily to the God of peace to preserve you in constant peace and true conjugal love and unity. I wish

[1] Solliciti servare unitatem Spiritus in vinculo pacis unum corpus, et unus Spiritus, sicut vocati estis in una spe vocationis vestræ.—Ephes. iv. 3, 4.

[2] Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram.—Ibid. 26.

you from my heart, with St. Paul: "Now, the God of patience and of comfort," in His infinite goodness, "grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ: That with one mind and with one mouth you may glorify God and the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,"[1] so that no discord nor disunion may have place in your hearts. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF HUSBANDS TO THEIR WIVES.

Subject.

1st. Explanation of the duty of husbands to their wives. 2d. Because that duty is not properly fulfilled, much disunion is caused in the married state, and just reason for complaint is given to wives.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Ipse enim sciebat quid esset facturus.—John vi. 6.
"For He himself knew what He would do."

Introduction.

If married people always knew the duties of their state, and all, husbands as well as wives, fulfilled them properly, what a blessing that would be! There would be then constant peace and unity, and temporal and spiritual prosperity in that state. But if one of the married couple is wanting in these duties, the foundation of contention and discord is already laid; just as in an organ, when one of the pipes is out of tune, the whole instrument is spoiled. If I were to ask the cause of the strife that reigns in many a household, what answer should I get? I know it already: the husband would angrily throw the whole blame on the wife; the wife, if I ask her about it, would declare herself as innocent as an angel, and would accuse her husband of being the only disturber of peace, so that I should be no wiser than before. My opinion is that they should both take part of the blame to themselves, for they either do not know their duty, or knowing it, they do not fulfil it as they ought. We shall begin with

[1] Deus autem patientiæ et solatii det vobis idipsum sapere in alterutrum secundum Jesum Christum: ut unanimes, uno ore honorificetis Deum, et patrem Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Rom. xv. 5, 6.

the duty of husbands, since they ought to have more sense and prudence, and are more frequently to be blamed for the want of harmony in the married state.

Plan of Discourse.

The explanation of the duty of husbands to their wives will form the first part. Because that duty is not always properly fulfilled, much disunion is caused in the married state, and just reason for complaint is given to wives. Such will be the second part.

A speedy and earnest amendment is much to be desired, in order to reunite the divided hearts in the bond of love. Oh, God of peace, we beg this of Thee, through the merits of Thy Virgin Mother Mary and the intercession of the holy angels guardian.

The authority of the husband over the wife must be one of love.

It is true that the husband is the head of the wife. St. Paul says to the Ephesians, in the 5th chapter, which furnishes me with almost the whole matter of this first part: "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church."[1] It is true that the husband is the master of the house: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."[2] Yet, it must be well understood that if the husband is the head, the wife is not therefore to be trodden under foot, as is, unfortunately, only too often the case! Eve, our first mother, as the holy Fathers wisely remark, was formed by God from the body of her future husband Adam; but from what part of his body? Not from the head, lest she should assume authority over him; nor from the feet, lest he should treat her in an unbecoming manner; but from a rib which is situated in the center of the body, near the heart, to signify that he should love his wife as his helper and companion. The husband is certainly master in the house, but the wife is not, therefore, his servant, on whom he can impose all sorts of degrading offices at will; much less is she to be treated tyrannically, as if she were a slave, which is, alas! only too often the case with wives! The authority of the husband over his wife, says St. Augustine, does not consist in treating her haughtily and arrogantly as an inferior, but in caring for her with mildness and tenderness.[3] It is not an authority of cruelty, but of love, and of the same kind of love as that with which the soul governs the

[1] Vir caput est mulieris, sicut Christus caput est Ecclesiæ.—Ephes. v. 23.
[2] Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.—Ibid. 22.
[3] Non principandi superbia, sed providendi misericordia.

body. In the words of St. Paul: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies."[1]

Take notice, married men; you must love your wives as your souls love your bodies. And how is that love shown? In the mildest and most amiable manner. In the first place, the soul lays no command on the body, without helping the latter to fulfil it. For instance, it desires to go out of the house, and commands the feet to set themselves in motion and to go to the appointed place; it wishes to gain some knowledge, and commands the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the tongue to speak and ask questions. The feet, eyes, ears, and tongue obey, but they have not all the work to do; the soul helps in it and even takes the greater part of the labor on itself; it sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, speaks with the tongue, and walks with the feet, and without its assistance, not one of those organs could make the least movement; they would be like the members of a dead body, which can neither hear, see, speak or move itself. If the feet, eyes, or ears cannot do their duty, or fulfil the command, through weariness or illness, the soul is not angry on that account, nor does it cry out: Wretched eye, why wilt thou not see! Useless foot, why dost thou not walk? It is rather full of pity for them, and does all in its power to give them rest and repose.

As the soul loves the body.

Such, oh, married people, is the authority that must obtain among you: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies." "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself."[2] And if men act against that love, have not wives a right to complain, and to ask meekly: Husband, is that the way you treat your own body? Are you so cruel to your own members? Is that the way in which you curse and swear against yourself? For I must tell you, in God's name, that according to St. Paul, you must treat me as you treat your own body. "For no man ever hated his own flesh,"[3] or persecuted it. You must love me as you love yourself. "Let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself."[4] If you tell me to do anything, I must obey; but you must command me as the soul commands the body; that is to say, mildly and lovingly, and with a sincere desire to help me. You should not forget these words: "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it."[5] With what great care does not the soul

In the same way a man should love his wife.

[1] Viri debent diligere uxores suas, ut corpora sua.—Ephes. v. 28.
[2] Qui suam uxorem diligit, seipsum diligit.—Ibid.
[3] Nemo enim unquam carnem suam odio habuit.—Ibid. 29.
[4] Unusquisque uxorem suam, sicut seipsum diligat.—Ibid. 33.
[5] Nemo unquam carnem suam odio habuit, sed nutrit et fovet eam.—Ibid. 29.

look after the body, and provide it with everything necessary for nourishment, clothing, pleasure, and delight, so that it may eat, drink, sleep, and be clothed well? The mouth, at the command of the soul, since no member of the body can move otherwise, sends the food into the stomach, that it may be distributed over the whole body, which is thus strengthened and comforted. Does the body suffer an injury? How the soul is troubled thereat and how it strives to ward off all hurt from the body and to protect it in every way! How rejoiced it is, on the contrary, if the body is in good health! In the same way must men love their wives. The latter must indeed contribute their share to the support of both; but that is principally the duty of the husband, who is bound to feed and clothe his wife and children decently. Adam alone, in punishment of his sin, received from God the command: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."[1] As a general rule, it is only the wife who, on her marriage, must leave her home, and sometimes her country, and must sacrifice her beloved parents, brothers, and sisters, in order to follow her husband; so that she gives herself up altogether to his love and care as long as she lives. Is it not then your bounden duty (as St. John Chrysostom writes to a married man) to be to her as father, mother, brother, and sister; to care for her as a father, to replace by a fatherly tenderness the loving care of her parents whom she abandoned for your sake, to rejoice with her in prosperity, to protect her from evil, and to care for her as you do for yourself? "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies."[2] Again, how does the soul act with the body? It loves and cherishes, and tries to do good to it in every possible way; and that constantly, although the latter may have lost its beauty; although it be sick, blind, and deaf; although it be incapable of using the reason that the soul communicates to it. The soul loves the body with a constant love, and leaves it not until death dissolves the bond that unites them both together, and forces them violently from each other; nay, even after that separation, the soul still longs for the day of judgment, that it may again be united to its body and be its companion for eternity. You, oh, Christian married people, should have for each other a love as constant as this, which no circumstance can change, and which lasts till death.

As Christ loves His Church.

St. Paul makes another beautiful comparison in the same chapter, when he says: "The husband is the head of the wife,

[1] In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane tuo.--Gen. iii. 19.
[2] Viri debent diligere uxores suas, ut corpora sua.

as Christ is the head of the Church." [1] And he adds: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it." [2] Oh, what a perfect pattern of conjugal love! All the figures and symbols that the Prophets use in Holy Writ to denote Jesus Christ, represent Him to us as a mild, patient, merciful, peaceful, and loving Master, "whose yoke is sweet, and whose burden light." During His life on earth, how friendly and amiable He was with all! While living in Nazareth with His Mother Mary and His foster father St. Joseph, the people of the town (as we learn from an ancient tradition) used to say, when they were troubled or annoyed about anything: "Let us go to the Son of Mary," [3] that he may console us! How mild and patient He was with His Apostles, when they were ignorant and rude fishermen; how He bore with their manifold faults and failings! With what love and even trustfulness He treated the wicked and sinful; so that the envious Pharisees who were eagerly looking for an opportunity of finding fault with Him, could discover nothing to condemn in Him, but that He was a friend and companion of sinners! And they tried thereby to render Him contemptible in the eyes of the people, saying: "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." [4] With what sweet words He addressed even His tormentors, while they were scourging Him, crowning Him with thorns, mocking at and blaspheming Him and nailing Him to the Cross! How fervently He prayed in His death-agony to His heavenly Father to forgive them! Nor has this love for His spouse, His Church on earth, grown cold since His death, now that He is seated at the right hand of His Father in the glory of Heaven. The Church of Christ, my dear brethren, is a moral body, or congregation of all faithful Christians, and not merely of those who are in the state of grace, as, amongst other heretics, the Jansenists, who spread their false doctrines under the appearance of piety, taught; but the Church is the congregation of all men who, having received holy Baptism, adore Jesus Christ as true God, and acknowledge as Visible Head, His Vicar on earth. But alas, how few there are in this congregation who by their holiness and piety live in accordance with the faith and religion they profess! How many who are Catholics only in word and outward appearance, but heathens indeed and in reality! And amongst the few who

[1] Vir caput est mulieris, sicut Christus caput est Ecclesiæ.

[2] Viri diligite uxores vestras, sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam, et seipsum tradidit pro ea.—Ephes. v. 25.

[3] Eamus ad filium Mariæ. [4] Hic peccatores suscipit, et manducat cum illis.

are looked upon as good and pious, how many there are who now and then violate their fidelity to their Spouse Jesus Christ by a mortal sin; who love the vain world and its laws, more than the Gospel of Christ! And yet, in spite of all this, Christ continues to love the Church as His spouse, to bear patiently and meekly with perjured adulterers, that is, with wicked sinners; to pray to His heavenly Father for them, and to give them daily Himself in the Holy Mass, as a means of atoning for their past sins and obtaining the grace of repentance, and as a sacrifice and victim of expiation. This love of Christ for His Church will never cease, but last to the end of the world, as He Himself says: "Behold, I am with you to the consummation of the world,"[1] by my favor and benevolence, by my help and assistance.

So, too, should the husband love his wife.

Married men, there you have a pattern of the love you should have for your wives: you must love them as Christ loves His Spouse, the Church;[2] that is to say, not merely as long as they are young and beautiful, but also when they are old and feeble; not merely when they are strong and healthy, but also when they are sickly and decrepit; not merely when they are agreeable and pleasing in their manners, but also when they are ill-tempered, peevish, and subject to many faults; not merely when they are ready to obey the least word, but also when they are obstinate and stiff-necked and cause you much annoyance. Nor must you love them as some do, who say: "I have had two pleasant days in the married state: the first was my wedding-day, and the second the day on which I lost my wife by death." You must love your wives constantly, till death, bearing their faults and shortcomings with mildness and patience; you must have a paternal care for them, and help them in all their necessities; in a word, you must love them, "as Christ also loved the Church."[3] Oh, if all husbands were exact in fulfilling this duty, what would you wives then think? Would not many of you be better off than you are now? Would there not be more peace, union, and contentment in the married state, than there now is? But, alas! it seems to me that I hear some, and perhaps many of you, sighing and lamenting to yourselves, and that, if it were allowed to do so, you would long since have interrupted me with your complaints! But patience! We shall hear those complaints in the

[1] Ecce, ego vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem sæculi.—Matth. xxviii. 20.
[2] Viri, diligite uxores vestras, sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.
[3] Sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.

Second Part.

And what are they? Oh, God help me, if you were only in my house for a day (think some) and saw how my husband treats me! It is all very well to talk of the love that Christ has for His Church, and of His patience, mildness, and amiability! There is not a more cruel, harsh, and ill-tempered man to be found anywhere than my husband. How nice he was to me at first, before our marriage! I thought him an angel! But now I know him better; he has neither a friendly word nor a kind look for me the whole day long. If I say a word, he tells me at once to hold my tongue, and if I continue speaking, he storms at and curses me. If anything goes wrong with him outside, I must bear the brunt of his ill-humor when he comes home; if any mishap occurs at home, I alone am to blame for it. If I sometimes commit a fault through carelessness or human frailty, he makes a terrible to-do about it! In fact, I do not know what to do, nor how I am to please him. The only return he makes for the services I try to render him, is grumbling, abuse, and scolding. If I give way to tears and show how distressed I am, he treats me like a dog that barks at him in the street; nor is he satisfied if I laugh and enjoy myself. What am I to do? Ah, wretched me, in what a miserable state I am! How can we live in peace and union with each other? How can I have a proper love for such a man?

Many husbands sin against this, by treating their wives harshly and angrily.

It is easy to talk of the love and care that the soul has for the body (says another)! My husband is a regular miser; he never gives me a penny to buy anything for the house; I have not decent clothes to wear; he hardly gives me and the children enough to eat. My husband, says a third, is a confirmed idler, who never does anything; he is a good-for-nothing who will not work; I have to support him, instead of being supported by him; I must provide him with food and clothing, which he ought to be able to provide me with. If I did not work so hard and had not the children's earnings to help me, we might all starve. Even that is not so bad, says a fourth; I have a spendthrift, drunken husband, who not only brings neither food nor money into the house, nor supplies us with proper clothing, but even makes away with what I try to save for the children from my dowry: what we earn during the week, he brings to the drinking-house on Sundays and holy days, and leaves me and the children to suffer hunger and thirst and to pine away in misery. When he comes home drunk, he makes such a row in the house that we are all disgraced

By not giving them proper nourishment.

before the neighbors. How can there be any love and union under such circumstances?

By treating them as servants, or beating them unmercifully.

It is easy to talk of loving as one's self, says a fifth. My husband does not treat me like a wife, but like a servant-maid, or like a worthless rag that is trodden under foot! I am not allowed to say anything either to the servants or the children in the house; if I tell them to do something, he at once gives them a contrary order, and I have to hold my tongue; he thus makes me quite contemptible before the servants, nay, even before my own sons and daughters, who can see for themselves every day that I have nothing to say in the house, so that they can do as they please without minding me at all. Alas, how could I love such a man, as I ought! It is easy to speak of love, says a sixth, when you have, not a mild and patient master, but a cruel and overbearing tyrant, for a husband! It is an every-day occurrence for me to be beaten and kicked and dragged about by the hair. If I remain quiet under such treatment, hoping thereby to move him to pity, he thinks I despise him and becomes still more ferocious; if I cry out and weep, he beats me still worse, so that the neighbors are often afraid that he will kill me; it seems, indeed, as if he were tired of me, and that he will not be easy until I am dead. May God help me!

By hating them and loving others.

It is easy to speak of love, thinks a seventh, for she dare not say it. My husband hates me and cannot bear the sight of me, although he likes others well enough. Would that I were esteemed even as much as my servant-maid. She has a great deal more to say in the house than I have, and many an insult I have to suffer that I must keep locked up in my breast. Can there be any trial greater than this? Is it possible for true love and harmony to exist under such circumstances?

By wickedly preventing them from practising their religion.

It is easy to talk, says another, of loving one's wife as Christ loves the Church! I have a wicked, vicious husband, whom I cannot induce to practise his religion; he never goes to Church or to a sermon; I never see him say an Our Father; he will never listen to anything good. God knows whether he ever goes to confession and communion, even at Easter! If he would only allow me to serve God as I wish! He cannot bear to see me pious; he keeps me and the children from practising devotion; with the exception of Sundays and holy days, he will not allow me to go to Church. If I wish to say my morning and evening prayers at home, as is the custom with Christians, I must do so stealthily, or he will snatch the prayer-book or the rosary out of my hands! I am

strictly forbidden to give alms, although we can well afford it, and ought to do so, according to the Christian law; he curses and swears so fearfully, that even the children are horrified and expostulate with him. He buys lost and stolen goods, and cares not whether it is right or wrong to do so; I must look on at that and dare not hope that I shall ever be allowed to make any restitution. I am afraid that he will thus drag me and the children down to hell with him. What sort of peace or quiet can I have with a man like that? It is easy to talk of love . . . . . oh, leave it so now, or we shall never come to an end! But how can conjugal love and union be preserved in such cases?

Wives complain justly.

I acknowledge that, if what you say is true, and your husbands alone are to blame for it—and I must believe you until I know something to the contrary—you are indeed very badly off, and I pity your miserable condition from my heart. How you are to act in such circumstances, and how you can at least perform your duty as far as peace, contentment, and union are concerned, I will tell you for your consolation, in next Sunday's sermon. Meanwhile, have patience! Seek consolation from God and from Heaven. Offer up your trials daily with a pure intention to God, who intends and arranges everything for your greater good, so that you may not bear them in vain (I know that they are very heavy) and may not lose the eternal joys of Heaven.

How unjust and wicked is the conduct of such husbands!

But woe to you, wicked husbands, who thus ill-treat your wives; who thus renounce the love that God so emphatically commands you to have for them; who make their lives so hard and so despairing! You burden yourselves with countless, terrible sins, and as we saw in the last sermon, make your houses dwelling-places of the devil, and turn the holy state of marriage, which should be a symbol of the loving union between Jesus Christ and His Church, into a hell of confusion and despair! You should act the part of a tender father to your wives, who for you left house and home, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and you treat them like galley-slaves who are driven with blows to their daily labor! They have given themselves up to you by the bond of marriage, that they may find help, comfort, and joy in your company during life, and now (like the unhappy man in the Gospel who was travelling to Jericho) they find that they have fallen into the hands of murderers, who, if they do not kill them, at least embitter their lives and torture them daily, nor can any good Samaritan come to their assistance! God has placed you as head over your wives, that you may support, comfort, and assist them, and you

are, instead of that, their butchers who try to take away their lives! For what difference does it make whether you put them to death at once by the sword or by poison, or wear away their lives by continual persecution, so that they are forced to long for death as a relief from their sufferings? You are joined together that you may help each other in the service of God, and bear the trials of your state so as to attain your last end, the kingdom of Heaven, but you act the part of devils to your wives, and try to bring them along with you from a temporal to an eternal hell! I heard once of a general who was so very severe and cruel to his soldiers if they committed the least fault, that whenever he was asked for mercy, he used to say in French: "Thanks be to God, that He has created me without pity and mercy!" so that he actually gloried in his cruelty. In the same way you, married men, who thus ill-treat your wives, appear to be glad of the suffering you cause them!

Woe to them from God.

But woe to you! I repeat. How hateful and unbearable you make yourselves to the Lord God! He is a God of mildness and patience, a God of love and mercy, who has commanded us to love even our worst enemies and to treat them with mildness and kindness. How much more does He not command a husband thus to treat the wife that is given him by the Church, a wife that he takes with the promise to look upon her, not as a servant or a slave, but as the companion of his life, whom he is to love sincerely! Woe to you again, I say, in the words of the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiasticus: "A hard heart shall fare evil at the last."[1] And if, according to the words of Christ, the meek, the peaceful, the merciful are blessed: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;"[2] then there is no surer sign of reprobation than to give way to a hard-hearted and cruel nature. The sentence is already pronounced by the Judge against such people: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."[3] If this is true of all those who do not perform the works of charity and Christian mercy to their neighbor, although the latter may not be in any way connected with them, how will it be with those who are hard and cruel to their own wives, with whom they ought to have one body, one spirit, one heart?

They are not to be excused.

Let no one try to excuse himself by saying he cannot bear with his wife's peevish humor, or that he is forced to treat her harshly on account of her bad conduct. If you are not pleased

[1] Cor durum habebit male in novissimo.—Eccl. iii. 27.
[2] Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur.—Matth. v. 7.
[3] Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

to adapt yourself to her humor, why did you marry her? If you are so very sensitive that you cannot bear the least annoyance, why did you enter the married state? For as a matter of course, something must now and then occur in that state which requires patience and meekness to be borne with. If your head is made of wax, you must not stand in the sun. I do not say that you must pass over all your wife's faults in silence, nor let her rule over you as she pleases; by no means; that would be another great fault on your side! And I can well imagine, too, that the husband is not always to have the whole blame, as I said in the beginning, but that the wife must have her share also, in causing strife and disunion. It may often occur that she has to be warned and corrected; but the husband must correct his beloved wife in the proper manner; not with shouting and roaring, not with abuse and foul language, nor with cursing and swearing, much less should he have recourse to beating and striking, unless in a case of absolute necessity. If he corrected his wife in that way, it would be like dipping his hand in the mud, in order to wash the face of another therewith. The correction must come from conjugal love and meekness, and not from anger, hatred, and aversion.

Conclusion and exhortation.

Such, then, in the oft-quoted words of St. Paul, must be your conclusion: "Husbands, love your wives;"[1] love them, "as your own bodies;"[2] which you are afraid to injure in the least, and which you care for and look after most diligently. Love them, "as Christ loves His spouse the Church,"[3] that is, at all times, in all circumstances, in sickness and health, in youth and old age, in riches and poverty, in fruitfulness and sterility, in prosperity and adversity, in constant peace and union with each other. If some of you have been hitherto harsh, cruel, and unmerciful to them, and are now ready to atone by a true and worthy reception of the sacrament of Penance, for the sins you have committed in a most inexcusable manner, against the express command of God, they are now ready to pardon you and forgive you from their hearts. Be reconciled again to each other, and do you replace your former harshness by a greater mildness, amiability, and love. Thus, Christian married people, must you love one another, until death separates you, and when you have both left this life, an indissoluble bond of love will unite you again in the land of the living, where peace, repose, and union reign without disturbance. Amen.

[1] Viri diligite uxores vestras. [2] Ut corpora vestra. [3] Sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.

THIRTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE CONDUCT OF WIVES WHOSE HUSBANDS GIVE THEM CAUSE FOR DISUNION.

Subject.

Instruction: how wives are to behave in such circumstances, and how they are to act so as to preserve peace and quiet.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Tulerunt ergo lapides ut jacerent in eum. Jesus autem abscondit se.—John viii. 59.

"They took up stones therefore to cast at Him. But Jesus hid Himself."

Introduction.

See the unreasonable anger and rage of the Jews on one side, and the wonderful mildness and patience of Jesus Christ on the other! They accuse Him of having a devil! "Thou hast a devil." He answers meekly: "I have not a devil."[2] They prepare to stone Him to death, and He, the Almighty God, who with a word could reduce them to nothing, gives way humbly before their rage and resentment, and hides Himself.[3]

Now, my dear brethren, in the Jews you have an example of the injustice of many husbands, who, as we have seen in the last sermon, treat their wives contrary to the law of Christian charity. Poor wives! what advice can be given to you in such circumstances? Are you to answer your husbands in an unchristian manner, and say to them: "Thou hast a devil," or abuse and revile them, saying: Our husbands are worse than demons? Oh, no; you would not do yourselves any good by such conduct! And what are you to do, then? See how Jesus Christ your Saviour acts: patience and meekness were the arms that He used against the cruel Jews. "But Jesus hid Himself."[3] If I could persuade you to follow the same course, then in a short time peace and union would be restored to you, or at least you would find your cross much easier to bear. At all events, I will now tell you—

[1] Dæmonium habes.—John viii. 48. [2] Ego dæmonium non habes.—Ibid. 49.
[3] Jesus autem abscondit se.

Plan of Discourse.

How wives in such circumstances must behave, how they are to act, so as to preserve peace and quiet. Such will be the whole matter of my instruction.

That this advice may be followed, help us, oh, Ruler of hearts, with Thy powerful grace, through the intercession of Thy beloved Mother and the holy angels guardian.

Patience is the best thing for all wives who have to suffer annoyances from their husbands

I know that it is a great trial for a wife (I am resuming the order of the complaints brought forward in the last sermon) to live continually with a passionate, angry, coarse, quarrelsome, and cruel husband. It is a great trial when, through avarice, he does not give her proper food, clothing, or care; or when, through idleness and laziness, he is unwilling to work, or spends everything in drinking and gambling. It is a great trial to live with a husband who, through hatred and aversion, does not allow her to say a word in the house, or to give any command, and so makes her contemptible in the eyes of the servants and children. A great trial when, in addition, she is ill-treated and beaten by him. A great trial to live with one who forgets conjugal fidelity, leads an impure life, and gives his love to strangers. A great trial to have an irreligious husband, who will not allow her to attend to her soul. And I must also confess that it requires great and rare skill, in such circumstances, to preserve peace and union with each other, or at least to keep one's own peace of heart and contentment! Yet the knot is tied which no one can loose; the heavy burden of the married state must be borne, and what cannot be amended must be recommended to God in patience. Plutarch writes that, formerly, it was the custom in Africa for a bride to go, on the day after her wedding, to her mother-in-law to ask for a dish-cloth, which was refused her with much scolding and abuse. And why was this, my dear brethren? In order that the bride, at the very beginning of her wedded life, might learn to bear the trials and annoyances of her state, and thus not be so easily put out if her husband said or did anything disagreeable to her; for, as it would not be the first annoyance she had to bear, so it would not be the last. With the same thought, Christian wives, must you arm yourselves, as often as your husbands give you trouble. You must summon up all your patience and think: What am I to do? I must bear the yoke for life; this is certainly not the last trial that I will have to bear. As we grow old together, the crosses will probably increase, so that I

must humbly resign myself to God's holy will. St. Paul says, speaking of those who intend to marry: "Nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh."[1] And this advice is good for all wives in general. Now let each one hear how she is to act in the different trials already mentioned.

Good advice for those who have ill-tempered husbands.

You have, then, as you say, a passionate, quarrelsome husband, who gives you neither a friendly word nor a kind look; who must have his way in everything; who curses and abuses you for the least fault. What are you to do, you ask. Listen: If you wish to preserve contentment and peace of heart, you must first take the best meaning out of everything; you must not imagine that your husband's cross looks and harsh words come from hatred and aversion towards you; for there are men who are stern and serious in their manner, and harsh and unkind in their speech, yet they are not less loving at heart; nay, the harsher their words, the deeper often is their love. Think that their unkindness is caused by some bodily indisposition to which one man is more subject than another; or by some annoyance caused him elsewhere which he cannot easily forget. The master of a house has too many things to think of and to look after, to be always able to appear with a smiling face. Think that the cursing and abuse come from an evil habit, as is unfortunately the case with most people, whose mouths are constantly filled with that hellish language, and that therefore he does not mean it seriously. If this anger comes from a want of conjugal affection, and from hatred and aversion towards you, then try to find out the cause of this hatred; if you discover it in yourself, oh, do your best to remove it! There is no better way to extinguish a fire, than to remove all inflammable material: take away the cause of his anger, and his aversion will soon cease, and you will be again united in the bonds of love.

How they must speak.

Again, no matter what is the cause of your husband's ill-temper, be careful, above all, not to answer him back angrily, or contradict him, or give him curse for curse, abuse for abuse; oh, no, that would not do any good! That would contribute as much to his amendment as blowing a bellows does to extinguishing a fire; it would only make matters worse. You must not try to stop a rushing torrent, but let it flow on unhindered, for the more you put in its way, the more it foams and rages. You must hold your tongue, and give way in everything, until his anger is over; if you make any answer, let it be in gentle words. Forget not the Proverb

[1] Tribulationem tamen carnis habebunt hujusmodi.—I. Cor. vii. 28.

of Solomon: "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury;"[1] and as even the meekest are aroused to impatience and anger by contradiction, so there is no nature so rough as not to be tamed where it meets nothing but patience and meekness.

What they must do.

Besides using loving words, show him that you have a real affection for him by doing all you can to please him, by having his food ready, looking after his clothing, and otherwise attending to his comforts as best you can. The world has before now seen fierce lions caressing like lambs those who drew a thorn out of their paws. There is no one so boorish and ill-tempered as not to be overcome and tamed at last by kind offices. Try that plan with your husband, and see whether he will not be kinder to you after a time. And if, as is very unlikely, your efforts are a failure, then have patience! Offer up your trials to God. He is the Ruler of hearts; if you love Him constantly, call upon Him daily with childlike confidence, and make your complaints to Him. He will know how to change your husband's heart. Thank God, too, that you are not worse off, and that you are not like many more wives, whose husbands are not content with giving them merely harsh words.

For those who have avaricious husbands.

What am I to do? asks another. My husband is such a miser that he never gives me a penny, nor supplies me with proper clothing, so that I am ashamed to go out and to appear amongst my equals, who are far better dressed than I. He hardly allows me sufficient food, or what he does give is of the worst quality, such as very poor people have. This is all the harder for me to bear, since I was accustomed to better things in my father's house, and we could fare much better now, if my husband were not so mean and niggardly. The servants in other houses are better off than I and my children; I find that so hard to bear that I cannot live in peace and love with him.

Who do not support them decently.

I am well aware of it; it is a hard case enough with poor people who have to toil and labor for their daily bread; their extreme poverty makes them deserving of pity; but it is harder still for a respectable woman to be reduced to such straits through sheer avarice, that she has barely enough to live upon. But if you cannot make matters better, what will you do? Is that a reason for destroying the peace and concord of the married life? By no means; if you did so, you would make your cross heavier, instead of lighter. Think, therefore, in order not to lose your content-

[1] Responsio mollis frangit iram, sermo durus suscitat furorem.—Prov. xv. 1.

ment, that it is due solely to the goodness of God that you are more wealthy than others. He could have caused you to be born of such poor parents that you would have had to beg your bread from door to door. How satisfied you would then have been with a piece of dry bread! Only think, now, that it is on account of poverty that you are so badly fed, and you will be as satisfied as you would have been, if you were really poor; or think that God has so arranged it, in order that you, with all your wealth, may taste a little poverty, for His sake. How many Saints have had far worse food, clothing, and bed than you, although they could have had, and deserved, far better?

Nor clothe them properly.

As far as your clothing is concerned, if it is not according to your taste or in the fashion, your husband is perhaps wiser and more prudent than many others, who spare no expense that their wives and daughters may be able to show off before the world, while they trouble themselves little about trying to be able to leave them something in their wills. If others of your rank and condition are better dressed than you, it does not follow that their dress is suited to their station or to yours. By no means; for how many are there who dress above their station? It would be well for most husbands if they were far more economical in this point, and they would put a stop to excessive luxury in dress, and avert ruin from many families, nay, from whole communities! Although your dress is not according to the fashion, still God knows you in it, and men, too, will learn to know you, perhaps all the better. You will not, on that account, be thought poorer or richer than you really are; but by being clad in that way, you will certainly be much richer than you seem to be. Finally, as far as food and clothing are concerned, it is not always niggardliness on your husband's part if he is sparing with regard to them: it is often a useful and necessary economy. Perhaps there are debts that he has to pay, of which he does not wish to speak to you for fear of distressing you, and he is obliged to reduce his expenditure in order to meet them. Or he may act thus through a fatherly foresight for your interest, that you and your children may have enough to live on comfortably after his death. But enough of this. There are others still to be heard.

For those who have idle, worthless husbands.

How am I to act so as to preserve love and union with my husband, who is so idle and lazy that he earns nothing, or so stupid that he does not know how to earn anything: or so old and feeble that he cannot work, and leaves the whole care of the house on my shoulders, so that I must work the whole day to support him

and the children, although it is his duty to support me? Listen: if your husband is unable to work, or knows not how to earn anything, then the difficulty solves itself; he cannot help himself and is not to be blamed. But you must never reproach him with idleness or stupidity, especially before strangers. But if he refuses to work through sheer laziness, what am I then to do? It is ill hunting with unwilling hounds; console yourself with the thought that it is better for your own and your children's eternal and perhaps temporal welfare to have only a little, than to have much. If your husband were industrious and diligent you would certainly be much better off as far as temporal wealth is concerned; but perhaps he would then force you to work harder and would be niggardly in supporting you. What would you think of that? I do not suppose you would like it very well. Or you might go to unnecessary expense through vanity, and so would have less at the end of the year than you have now, and you and your children would be less able to endure the hardships of poverty, because you would be too used to an easy and comfortable life. Meanwhile, your diligence must make up for your husband's idleness; be, therefore, more economical and sparing in dress, furniture, pleasures, etc., and you will, with God's help, have quite enough. He who draws a little water every day, and puts it into a good, strong vessel, will have more at the end of the year, than he who draws a large quantity at once and pours it into a leaky vessel, or spills it out on the ground. At least you ought to be satisfied (since a man cannot have every perfection at once), even if your husband is idle, lazy, and good-for-nothing, if he lives in peace and quiet and is always friendly and loving to you. Oh, if every wife had that good fortune! How good would they not all be to their husbands! You too must be satisfied, and see that you do not complain of your husband's idleness or worthlessness, nor cause strife or quarrelling in the house. All the rest you must leave in the hands of God, who, if you trust in Him and keep in His friendship, will not allow you or your children to starve.

For those who have drunken husbands.

Ah, says another, I wish my husband was like that; he comes home drunk every Sunday and holy day, and sometimes during the week also, and makes away with all our savings. How can I live in peace and love with him? Yes, I acknowledge that in this case a good deal of skill is required to manage things properly. The best advice I can give you, is to take every opportunity of showing how abominable and degrading the vice of drunkenness is; but you must be careful how and when you do so. Most

wives do it when their husbands come home drunk at night. They abuse, revile, curse, and swear at them, and afterwards complain that all they can say is of no use, and that their husbands are growing worse and worse. And I believe it, too ; I should not be surprised if the wives gained nothing but blows by such ill-directed efforts. That is not the time for reproach or exhortation; there is no use in saying anything when you will not be listened to ; for then it is not reason but strong drink that is uppermost with your husband. While he is in that state you should only give him kind words, and be friendly with him ; say that he is quite right to amuse himself, that he wants it after his week's hard work, etc. But afterwards, you can find an occasion of expostulating with him, when you think the drunken fit is over, or when you see that he has been impressed by a sermon, and has been to confession or to communion, or when he is more friendly than usual with you. Then entreat him with kind words to give up that vice, by which he places his soul in danger of hell; to take more care of his health, which he is ruining, and of his life, which he is shortening ; to be more mindful of his honor and reputation, for he brings disgrace on himself among his neighbors and acquaintances by his drunken habits, and to have pity on his poor children, to whom he gives such a bad example and whom he is likely to reduce to beggary—and so on. But be careful not to get vexed if he sometimes takes a drop too much at home with others who visit him, although he may spend more than you like, for it is better to bear with a lesser evil than to run the risk of a greater one. If your husband sees in you a constant patience, friendliness, and love towards himself, and you unite fervent prayer to your gentle reproaches, he will enter into himself at last, acknowledge how dreadful the vice is to which he is addicted, break himself of it more and more, and finally give it up altogether.

For those whose husbands beat them, when they give cause for it.

Still more to be pitied are those unhappy wives whose husbands beat and ill-treat them as if they were servants or slaves. How can they live in peace and quiet? Yes, they say, it is easy to talk of that ! And I pity you with all my heart ! But I must ask you one question. Are you thus ill-treated because you are obstinate or disobedient, or on account of other serious faults, or is it simply because your husband is cruel and unmerciful by nature, although you are quite innocent? If the former is the case, then you must acknowledge that you are to blame, although, as I said before, husbands are guilty of sin when they make use of such

cruel punishments, for Christian charity and conjugal love should suggest to them a milder form of chastisement and one less likely to interfere with domestic peace and harmony. Correct the fault that you know to be displeasing to your husband, although you may sometimes think you are in the right; be careful not to talk or act in such a way as to incur that ill-treatment again; try to please him and satisfy him in every way, for, as we have seen already, even the most savage beasts are tamed by kindness.

When they are innocent.

If you suffer innocently, and find that all your patience, mildness, kindness, and love cannot save you from ill-treatment, then your innocence itself will be your greatest consolation in the sight of God, if you keep in His friendship, and remember that He who is innocence itself suffered the shameful death of the cross for you, and you will be ready to suffer anything, even undeservedly, in order to be more like your crucified Redeemer. This inward consolation of the heart will more than repay you for your bodily sufferings. Christ Himself will say to you, as He said formerly to the holy Peter Martyr, when the latter was imprisoned for a supposed crime by his Superiors; kneeling before a crucifix he said: "Oh, dear Lord, what have I done to be thus miserably imprisoned? My innocence is known to Thee!" And he heard a voice from the crucifix, saying: "And what have I done, Peter,[1] that I should be hanging on the cross?" Whereupon the servant of God was filled with confusion, and was quite resigned, nay, was full of joy and consolation in his gloomy prison. Remember that for your consolation, Christian wives, as often as you are unjustly and cruelly ill-treated by your husbands. Do not cry out or make such a noise that the whole neighborhood can hear you, for that would enrage your husbands and make them still more savage. If you know by experience when they are angry and ill-humored, then act like Christ in the Gospel, when the Jews took up stones to throw at Him: "But Jesus hid himself."[2] Keep out of the way, and out of the house, if you can, until the storm is over. In that manner, if you cannot have peace with your cruel husbands, you will at least have peace with yourselves, and, what is most important of all, you will be at peace with God.

For those who are unfaithful.

Blows hurt the body, but the wounds of the heart, about which one cannot even utter a complaint, are far more painful. Such is the secret lamentation of those whose husbands are given

[1] Et ego Petre, quid feci?

[2] Jesus autem abscondit se.

to impurity, forgetful of their conjugal fidelity, and seeking to gratify their brutal passions elsewhere, or what is still worse, bestowing their affections on a miserable servant in the house, who then rules over both master and mistress. Oh, what a terrible vice! Holy city of Treves, is it possible that such a thing could occur in thy midst? I hope that it is utterly unknown to thee! Yet, alas, it is not unknown in this Christian world! Unhappy wives, where that is really the case, and not merely the effect of your own groundless suspicions! I hardly know what advice to give you, for when a man arrives at that degree of wickedness, there is hardly any help for him; the eternal flames of hell are not enough to deter him from it! And must you then despair of having peace and harmony? Not at all; although, to tell the truth, I can find no other means, as long as you are not wanting in proper love and affection for your husband, and when he is well disposed, try to represent the enormity of his guilt, and get the priest or other good friends who know the circumstances, to help you therein. If all this profits nothing, then I know of no other means than to be patient and resign yourself humbly into the hands of God, who has borne with that terrible crime so patiently, awaiting the conversion of the sinner. Nor must you forget to pray earnestly and humbly for your husband's conversion. You must pity him sincerely, since he is enslaved by a terrible passion that has sometimes hurled those who appeared to be great Saints into the lowest depths of sin. You must never despair of his conversion. Let your sighs and prayers continually ascend to God with the greatest confidence; get Masses said: give generous alms and be diligent in the works of Christian charity, that God may free your husband from the chains that enslave him. The strongest iron chain may be broken with due diligence; no sinner is so hardened in wickedness that he may not at last yield to the influence of divine grace; God never closes the door of His graces against humble and fervent prayer. Augustine was freed from the same unhappy state, in which he had abandoned himself to despair, by the prayers of his holy mother, Monica, and became a great Saint. You must also be as kind and helpful to your husband as if he were most faithful to you; in that way the holy Queen Elizabeth, of Portugal, freed the king, her husband, from the same disgraceful vice, and converted him; she used even to caress his illegitimate children, and care for them as if they were her own. This loving kindness and indomitable patience at length touched the king's heart, so that, conquered by the virtue of his wife, he afterwards led a pure life.

You must also follow the same plan, in order to live in peace and quiet, who have a wicked, irreligious husband, by whom, as you say, you are kept away from your religious duties. It is true that he can now and then prevent you from the outward practice of devotion, but he can never force you against your will to give up real interior piety and the true love of God, no matter how much he may try to do so; he may keep you busy at home every day during the week, so that you cannot go to Church as you would wish, nor practise your usual devotions; but you must be satisfied; the fulfilment of the divine will does not consist in those things, and they make a great mistake who imagine that they cannot be pious nor do any good unless they spend the greater part of their time in the Church and in the outward practice of devotion. No; the real, true, and genuine piety and devotion of the Christian wife consists in working diligently at home, fulfilling her husband's wishes in all things lawful and bringing up her children in the fear and love of God; it is that which God requires of you before anything else; that is your bounden duty, and that you can do, although you are often prevented from going to Church. Your husband may hinder you from saying vocal prayers at home, or he may disturb you when saying them, but he cannot, no matter how he tries, keep you from inward prayer and union of the heart with God; he cannot hinder you from often having holy thoughts, making pious ejaculations, and often renewing your good intention; and that kind of piety is much better and more pleasing to God, than long prayers that you read out of your book in the Church. During your work, then, and while performing your domestic duties, keep yourself always in the presence of God; cry out to Him frequently: "May Thy holy will be done, oh, Lord! Give me patience under my trial!" And God will hear your prayer as well as if you made it on your knees before the altar. Every place is pleasing to God; He is always ready to give audience. He looks more to the hearts and the good will of His servants and handmaids, than to their works. Such was the way in which St. Catherine of Siena acted, when her parents kept her employed in the kitchen, in order to put a stop to her devotions; the parents lost their trouble, for Catherine, even when a kitchen-maid, advanced rapidly in piety and virtue.

For those whose husbands keep them away from their religious duties.

But if your husband tries to keep you away from pious works of obligation, or to lead you into sin, you must not and cannot obey him: you must firmly and earnestly give him the same an-

Whose husbands try to lead them into sin.

swer that St. Dorothy gave the emperor, when he told her to renounce the true God and sacrifice to idols: "What," said she, undismayed, "the Emperor of Heaven and earth has told me to serve Him alone, and I must obey Him rather than you." Such also should be your determination, Christian wives, at all times, even if your husbands raved and stormed at you like demons. In that way you will be martyrs for virtue and for the glory of God, and you will be of the number of those of whom Christ says: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."[1] Continue in the fear of God with a child-like confidence, and love Him with all your hearts; that is the best and surest means of converting a wicked husband, and bringing him to a better mode of life; as the Apostle says: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife."[2]

Conclusion and exhortation to all wives.

Finally, Christian wives (since I cannot advise each one of you separately), whatever trials you have to suffer from your husbands, do all you can to be peaceful and contented as far as yourselves are concerned. You will succeed in this if you only know how to give way meekly, and to bear every cross that you cannot avoid, with constant patience and resignation to the will of God. St. Augustine gives us an example of this, in his own mother, Monica: she, as he relates, was very harshly treated by Patritius, her husband, yet she never gave him a cross word nor complained of him to others, and thus she brought him over, little by little, not only to be good and kind to her, but also to abandon heathenism and become a Christian. If you are not so successful, remember, at all events, that you have a fine opportunity of increasing your merit in the sight of God. There is no art required, says St. John Chrysostom, to love those who love us, to be obedient to, pleased, and satisfied with one who is all kindness and goodness to us. But to live in peace and love with a husband who often contradicts and annoys you, is a sign of real heroic virtue. Remember that this is the ladder by which you have to ascend to Heaven. According to the words of St. Paul: "The momentary and light weight of our tribulations worketh for us an eternal weight of glory."[3] Read sometimes the lives of the holy martyrs and confessors; see how they chastised and pun-

[1] Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.—Matth. v. 10.

[2] Sanctificatus est enim vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem.—I. Cor. vii. 14.

[3] Momentaneum et leve tribulationis nostræ æternum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis. —II. Cor. iv. 17.

ished themselves, and how they allowed themselves to be beaten, flayed alive, and burnt to death by tyrants, for God's sake, and think that, as really is the case, God allows you to suffer that domestic martyrdom that you may gain Heaven. Often call to mind the sins of your youth and the eternal fire of hell that you deserved thereby, and think: This is the rod with which the divine goodness now chastises me, that I may escape eternal torments. Whenever you have anything to suffer, say in your heart with Father Eusebius of Nuremberg, when he was suffering from a painful illness: "That is not fire!"[1] The cross looks that my husband gives me are not fire; his unkind words are not fire; the blows and cuffs and ill-treatment are not fire! Happy me, if I can thereby escape eternal fire, and gain the everlasting joys of Heaven, to which we must come through many tribulations! Yes, my God, I abandon myself to Thy holy will! Let what may happen, Thou art worthy that I should suffer injustice for Thy sake; my sins deserve a greater punishment; Thy Heaven is worth a still severer martyrdom, and there I place my consolation and await its eternal delights. Do Thou, oh, God, give me constant patience and grace to that end. Amen.

THIRTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS.

Subject.

1st. Explanation of the duty of wives to their husbands. 2d. On account of the frequent neglect of this duty, much misunderstanding and disunion are caused in the married life.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Pax vobis.—John xx. 20.
"Peace be with you."

Introduction.

This was the greeting of Jesus Christ to His disciples whenever He appeared to them after His Resurrection: "Peace be with you."[2] He knew well how much depends on peace. Christ-

[1] Non est ignis! [2] Pax vobis.

ian married people, peace be with you! That is the best and most excellent thing that I can wish you. For there is nothing more necessary, especially in the married life, than peace, union, and constant love with and for each other. As we have seen already, husbands most frequently disturb this peace by not performing their duty as they ought. Nor have I any doubt that many wives were well pleased with the sermon preached on that subject, and that they wished in their hearts that their husbands were present to learn their duty and the enormity of their faults against it. There may be some, too, who, as soon as they went home, were well able to favor their husbands with an interpretation of what they had heard, and to say to them: It is a pity you were not there; the sermon would have suited you admirably. For every one is ready to listen, as long as the truth is told to others, and not to himself. But, as I have already remarked, it is not always the husbands who disturb peace, love, and union; very often the wives do that also, because they do not know their duty towards their husbands, or do not fulfil it properly. This shall be our subject to-day.

Plan of Discourse.

In the first part, I will explain the duty of wives to their husbands. In the second part, I will show that on account of the frequent neglect of this duty, much misunderstanding and disunion are caused in the married life, and further, I will explain how husbands must act in order to preserve peace in such circumstances. Peace be with you will be the conclusion as well as the beginning.

Do Thou, oh, God of peace, give Thy grace to all married people. To this end pour abundant blessings onthem, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels of peace.

Ridiculous custom of married people among the Sacians.

Ælianus tells us, in his History, of a ridiculous, or rather, foolish custom amongst the Sacians. Amongst these people, when the bridegroom was bringing his bride home, accompanied by a great crowd, and the bridal party had arrived at the door of the house, the newly-married pair set to in real earnest, in presence of the whole crowd, fighting and contending with each other, until one succeeded in prostrating the other on the ground. If the man was beaten, he was bound to be subject to his wife, to obey her as her servant, and to wait upon her his whole life long, while the latter was led into the house triumphantly, as its mistress. If, on the other hand, the man conquered, he was to be

henceforth master of the house, while his wife was bound to wait upon him and to follow him into the house humbly and respectfully, like a poor maid-servant. If, after a long struggle, the spectators decided that it was a drawn battle, then both had equal rights, the wife having as much authority as her husband. This custom was strictly maintained, and any one who acted against it was punished juridically. Therefore the boys and girls began from their earliest youth to practise fighting, and did not mind it in the least if they sometimes got rather hard knocks, because they wished to prepare themselves for the time of their marriage, so as to secure to themselves the authority in the household.

Married Christians must observe a far different rule.

Poor women! If the same custom obtained in our days, it would go hard enough with most of you, for you are brought up so delicately and tenderly that you could not withstand a strong man for a moment! Yet, I need not pity you on that account, no matter how weak you may be, for you can find other ways and means of usurping the authority in the house, and of compelling your husbands to give way to you, for the sake of preserving peace, quiet, and unity in the married life. But that is not right! The law and regulation laid down by St. Paul for Christian families, differ widely from that. Read the 5th chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, and you will find there, plain enough, these words: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."[1] Take notice, then, Christian wives; although your husbands owe you love and fidelity as their companions, yet they are the masters of the house, they have authority over you, and you must be subject to them. And this is the first duty toward your husband, which the married state imposes on you, namely, submissive obedience.

Wives must be subject to their husbands.

This submission is founded on the natural law.

The reason of this obedience is twofold; it is according to the natural law, and it is a punishment of original sin. The natural subjection of the wife to the husband is founded on the superiority of the male sex over the female. It is in accordance with reason that where there is question of authority amongst two individuals, the more excellent should have it; therefore, in every kingdom of the world, the sons succeed to their fathers' throne, in preference to the daughters; nay, in some countries in the world there is a law forbidding females to reign. Besides, our first father Adam came immediately from the hands of God, who Himself formed the clay into a body and breathed the soul into it. Eve was made, as the Holy Scripture says, from a rib of

[1] Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.—Ephes. v. 22.

Adam. Now it is an axiom of jurists that a building belongs to the owner of the ground, as well as whatever crops the ground produces. Thirdly, as a general rule, God has given more of the wisdom, prudence, foresight, and fortitude that are necessary to govern to man than to woman (although there are many women who are much more clever than men), and this appears to be the reason why St. Paul did not allow women to preach in churches, nor would the Catholic Church ever permit that, for otherwise many errors would be the result. It is therefore natural and reasonable that, if one of the married pair is to govern the other, the weaker in understanding should submit to the stronger, and therefore the wife must obey her husband.

Such is the law of God.

In addition to this natural law of subjection, which would also have been observed in Paradise in the state of innocence, there is still another which God imposed upon wives in punishment of original sin. Eve was the first to allow herself to be deceived by the infernal serpent and to eat the forbidden fruit in the hope of becoming like to God and of being worthy of adoration. Nor was she content therewith: by her sweet and flattering words she induced her husband to follow her example and transgress the divine command, and thereby she brought destruction on us all. Therefore God said to her: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children."[1] That was in punishment of her sin. And immediately afterwards she heard the words: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."[2] That was because she had led him into sin. How was that? asks Abulensis in wonderment. If Eve before the fall was subject to her husband, according to the natural law, how could the same submission be imposed upon her as a punishment for her sin? Yes, he answers, before the fall she was subject to her husband as to a gracious prince, but after it she had to obey him as her master: He shall have dominion over thee.[3] So also St. Paul in the passage already quoted: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."[4] Now, what is the difference between the government of a prince and that of a master? A prince, according to the philosopher Aristotle, commands his subjects according to the general law, and in matters pertaining to the general welfare; a master commands his subjects how, when, and where he pleases. "Such is my will, such my command;"[5] and if you

[1] In dolore paries filios.—Gen. iii. 16.
[2] Sub viri potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur tui.—Ibid.
[3] Ipse dominabitur tui.
[4] Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.
[5] Sic volo, sic jubeo.

ask why: "My will is sufficient reason."[1] Therefore, there are two very valid reasons for wives to be subject to their husbands "as to the Lord."[2]

In what and how they must obey.

But how, in what manner, are they to obey? With fear and reverence, answers St. Paul: "Let the wife fear her husband."[3] Not, indeed, with a servile fear, for, as we have seen already, when speaking of the duty of husbands, conjugal love should be the motive of all authority and of every command; but with a child-like respect, which springs from love, and in virtue of which a wife should dread contradicting her husband's will in the least thing. How far must this obedience extend? Lest I should say too much, we will hear St. Paul again: "As the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things."[4] In what? "In all things."[5] There you have it all in a word. In all things, provided that nothing is commanded against the will of God. Otherwise there is no exception; they must obey in all things, even against their will, and in disagreeable things. If the husband wishes the wife to hold her tongue, she must obey; if he tells her to remain at home, she must obey; if he commands her to return at a fixed hour, she must obey; if he desires her to undertake a certain work, to dress in a certain manner (provided it is lawful), she must obey; in all things she must submit to the good will and pleasure of her husband. This authority of the husband is even ratified by God to such an extent, that God Himself almost yields His own right in favor of it. For instance, the wife makes a vow to go on a pilgrimage, or to have so many Masses said, or to give so much to the poor, or to fast on certain days in the week, and so forth, the husband can say: No, I will not allow it; you must remain at home; you must not have Masses said, nor give any more alms; you must eat and drink as usual. And if she gets scrupulous and says: But I have made a vow to do these things, he can answer: I release you from the vow, and free you from all such obligations. But you are not the Pope, to be able to absolve me from a vow! Although I am not the Pope, yet the sacrament of Matrimony has given me power and right to free you from your vow. And such, my dear brethren, is the general doctrine of theologians, provided that such vows are in any way disadvantageous to the married life. Such great authority has the husband over his wife!

[1] Stat pro ratione voluntas. [2] Sicut Domino.
[3] Uxor autem timeat virum suum.—Ephes. v. 33.
[4] Sicut Ecclesia subjecta est Christo, ita et mulieres viris suis in omnibus.—Ibid. 24
[5] In omnibus.

By such obedience, wives get the upper hand of their husbands.

Ah, Christian wives, do not get angry at what I say. I am only a poor echo of the great Apostle, St. Paul, and a herald of the doctrine that he taught the whole world. Ah, I say again, if you were only constant in the practise of that obedience, you could not find a better means of having the supremacy that you perhaps long for and desire in your hearts; for in that way you would in a short time make your husbands subject to you, and rule over them as you please, so that, even if God had not commanded you to obey, and St. Paul had never said a word about it, your own advantage and profit ought to suggest it to you. Father Cornelius à Lapide, the celebrated commentator of the Holy Scriptures tells a story of a young wife, who went to an old, experienced, and clever man, to ask him how she should live in the married state so as to be always happy. The wise old man answered: "If you wish to rule over your husband, you must obey him," and do what he tells you; "for a good woman rules her husband by being obedient to him."[1]

Proved by examples.

If there was ever a wife who had authority, it was Livia Augusta, who ruled Cæsar, her husband, the ruler of the world. How did she manage that? She told it herself to an intimate friend: "By being very reserved, and by doing all that Augustus wished."[2] In the same way Clotilde, the wife of Clovis, king of France, obtained authority over her husband and over the whole kingdom; she always obeyed the king with the greatest humility. Whenever he asked her to do anything, her answer was: "My Lord, I have left my will in my father's house; here in France I have no will but that of my husband." And then Clovis used to say: "I have a wife of great understanding and excellent memory, but she has no will." In that way she brought matters so far, that once on his return from a battle in which he had been victorious, he publicly declared himself a Christian and said: "Clovis has conquered his enemies, and Clotilde has conquered Clovis. I now renounce heathenism and embrace the religion that Clotilde has taught me by her example." Christian wives, is not that a fine way of gaining authority over your husbands? "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."[3]

They must be faithful to their husbands in domestic matters.

This first obligation brings with it a second, namely, inviolable fidelity and helpfulness in domestic management. Certainly a man is obliged to support his wife and children, but the wife is

[1] Si vis imperare viro, pareas, bona enim mulier parendo viro imperat.
[2] Multa modestia, et quod ea, quæ placerent Augusto, facerem libenter.
[3] Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.

not to remain idle on that account ; she must help her husband according to his desire, and both must take their part in the duties and business of their state. Generally speaking, it is the man's duty to attend to out-door business, while the wife has to look after the house, to care for the children, and bring them up carefully in a Christian manner, to see that the servants do their work properly, to prepare her husband's meals in due time, and to look after all the other details of domestic management. If she is careless in this respect, and neglects her business, or if she buys things or gives them away, or makes and receives presents, or otherwise arranges matters according to her own will and pleasure, she would act contrary to the fidelity she owes her husband, who is alone lord and master of the house, and whom she is bound to help, by keeping his house for him as he wills and not otherwise.

They must always love their husbands.

Finally, as the husband is bound to love his wife from his heart, so also must she reciprocate this love ; and she must not only do so really in her heart, but also show it outwardly in her behavior. Hence she must always meet him with the greatest affection and kindness ; she must contribute as much as possible to his repose, consolation, pleasure, and enjoyment ; she must look after his health, as she would after her own ; she must attend to him, if he is weak and sickly ; she must console him in sorrow and affliction; she must be careful of his good name, honor, and reputation, so that he can see by all her words and actions that she loves him sincerely as she loves herself. There are many examples of this conjugal affection on the part of wives related in the Sacred Scriptures: for instance, Michol, the wife of David, when she heard that the soldiers of her father Saul were seeking him, immediately let him down by a rope from a window of the house, and dressed up a wooden image and placed it in the bed so as to deceive the soldiers and give her husband more time to escape, as we read in the 19th chapter of the First Book of Kings. The same love was shown by Abigail to her husband Nabal, although, as the Holy Scripture says, he was an avaricious, drunken, foolish, and wicked man. When he, through niggardliness, refused to give David the food that the latter requested of him, and David was therefore about to punish him, Abigail came forward to save her husband. She brought many presents to David and thus appeased his anger, so that he swore solemnly : " Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech : and blessed be thou who hast kept

me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand. Otherwise, as the Lord liveth, the God of Israel, if thou hadst not quickly come to meet me, Nabal would not have lived till the morning light." [1]

What the Bavarian women did.

The story of the women of Bavaria is well known. When Guelph, Duke of Bavaria, was beseiged by the Emperor Conrad III., with a great force, and was on the point of having his town burnt down, the women of the town sent a petition to the emperor, and asked him to allow them, since they had nothing to do with the war, to leave the town unharmed and to bring with them whatever each one could carry. Their petition was granted. The emperor came to see them leave the town, fully believing that they would bring away nothing but their clothes and a few domestic utensils; but what was his surprise when he saw all, from the duchess down to the lowliest matron, carrying their husbands on their backs out of the town, through the camp. This sight drew tears from the emperor, so that he spared the town and offered peace and friendship to the Duke. When Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Florence, read this story as he once lay sick in bed, he was so delighted with it that he recovered his health, although the doctors could not help him. I think, my dear brethren, that if the same chance were offered to wives in our days, under the same circumstances, many husbands would have to remain at home, or their wives would not carry them far without letting them fall, through want of proper love and affection. And, therefore, many husbands complain, with reason, that their wives do not attend to their duty, and in this way occasion a great deal of strife, quarrelling, and contention in the married life. This complaint, and how husbands must act so as to preserve peace, we shall consider in the

Second Part.

By a want of diligence and fidelity in housekeeping.

It is intolerable for an inferior to usurp authority that does not belong to him, and to try to command his superior. It is unjust when one can expect neither consolation nor help from a person who is bound to assist him in bearing his burden. And it is a most painful thing when one is despised, neglected, and hated by a person from whom he has a right to expect a tender love and affection. Such is the wretchedness and misery of many

[1] Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel, qui misit te hodie in occursum meum, et benedictum eloquium tuum, et benedicta tu, quæ prohibuisti me hodie, ne irem ad sanguinem, et ulciscerer me manu mea. Alioquin vivit Dominus Deus Israel; nisi venisses in occursum mihi, non mansisset Nabal usque ad lucem matutinam.—I. Kings xxv. 32–34.

husbands who have bad wives. These latter, as we have seen from St. Paul, are bound to be subject to their husbands, and to obey their least sign, but to the husband's great disgrace, how often do we not hear that the wife rules the house! Sometimes this happens through the husband's cowardice and timidity, but more frequently still from the obstinacy, pride, and arrogance of the wife, who refuses to obey, and insists on having her way in everything; otherwise she fills the house with murmurs, complaints, abuse, and curses. She goes out when and wherever she likes, remains away as long as she pleases, and follows her own inclination with regard to meals and other details of housekeeping. Is not that enough to exhaust any man's patience?

Many fall therein by disobedience.

If the wife stops at home, as all decent and pious women should, unless the divine will or necessity requires otherwise, she is often of no more use in housekeeping than a silver goblet that is placed for show on the side-board. Brought up idle and vain by her parents, she remains so in the married state, and brings up her daughters like herself. Her hands are too soft for her to work in the kitchen, in the garden, or in her room; these occupations are unfit for such a grand lady! She sleeps till late in the day, spends a long time before the looking-glass, receives visits and is glad of the chance to do so, goes to tea-parties, and wastes her time in idle amusements which do not bring a penny into the house. If she has none of these things to pass away the time with, she pesters her poor husband, who has serious matters to think of, with her vain and frivolous chatter, until he becomes almost distracted. St. Paul describes wives of this class in his first Epistle to Timothy, 5th chapter: "And withal being idle, they learn to go about from house to house: and are not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not."[1] These are not my words, my dear brethren, they are the words of St. Paul. Nor do I mean to say that all wives are like that; let them take it for whom it is meant. There are others who trouble themselves too much altogether about the housekeeping; they are either too sparing and economical, so that the servants, who sometimes do not get enough to eat, bring the house into disrepute by their complaints, and the husbands, who cannot always interfere, are ashamed when they go into the company of their equals; or they are so domineering and harsh with the servants that no one will stop a year with them, and the innocent husband must bear his part of that disgrace too.

[1] Otiosæ discunt circuire domos: non solum otiosæ, sed et verbosæ, et curiosæ, loquentes quæ non oportet.—I. Tim. v. 13.

By vanity and prodigality.

There are others who are too prodigal in spending money on dress, useless furniture, gambling, and often (what a shame for a woman !) on drink. If they see others of their condition well dressed, they must be like them ; if others have new-fangled laces and ribbons, they are not easy until they have them too, and for peace' sake their husbands are obliged to give in and spend their hard-earned money, although they can ill afford it, on those useless gimcracks ; thus verifying the words of the Prophet Aggeus : "He that hath earned wages, puts them into a bag with holes," [1] and gets no profit from them. If a prudent husband objects to this expense, and disapproves of too great luxury in dress, oh, then it is all up with mutual love ! His lady wife has neither a good word nor a kind look for him, and there is nothing but quarrelling in the house. If he tries to reason her out of her folly, he has his trouble for nothing, for there is no reasoning with that kind of vanity ; the more reasons you bring forward, even if they are founded on the words and law of Christ Himself, the more obstinate will the foolish woman grow, lest she should have to confess herself in the wrong. I must dress in the fashion, like others of my condition, she says, whereas it is her bounden duty to do as her husband tells her. That is the law imposed on her by God ; she must obey it, and not the law of the vain world.

By a want of true love.

And what is the use of all that luxury in dress ? I am speaking to you, Christian wife ; answer me ! For whose sake do you dress in that way ? Is it for your husband's, whom alone you must try to please ? But he would be very glad if you were not so extravagant. Is it then to please others ? At least it seems so: for when you are at home with your husband, and do not expect any visitors, you do not care how you dress. Your vain and fashionable apparel is kept for strangers whom you meet outside, or in society, in order to excite their admiration. What must your husband think of that, since he cannot bear to see you trying to attract the notice of others ? And it is another hidden thorn in his side, when he sees that you are always friendly and smiling with strangers, but gloomy and sour at home. Others who are free from this vice, are of an obstinate, quarrelsome, and disagreeable disposition. They cannot bear the least thing and must always have the last word. If their husbands make a remark, they are sure to have some snappish answer ready, and then they complain afterwards that they are ill-treated and have

[1] Qui mercedes congregavit, misit eas in sæculum pertuseum.—Agg. i.

no peace with their husbands. Nor, indeed, am I surprised at that. Eulenspiegel says: Men cannot bear me, but I pay them in their own coin. Others, who are afraid to venture so far, since they know by experience that it would be worse for them if they did, are frequently unfriendly and sulky with their husbands, so that the latter have reason to doubt the sincerity of their affection. A very dangerous thing, indeed; wives, be careful! You may think it a light thing to trifle with your husband's love, but it is a trifling that might easily have serious consequences, and drive them away from you to seek consolation elsewhere, and thus you might have to answer for many grievous sins.

What a trial for husbands to have such wives!

Worthy, indeed, of pity are the unfortunate men who must live with wives of that kind! It was formerly the custom of the Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews for men to purchase their wives from the parents, either by money or by long service; thus, for instance, the Patriarch Jacob had to serve Laban for fourteen years, in order to get his daughter Rachel in marriage, as we read in the 29th chapter of the Book of Genesis. David had to slay two hundred Philistines, exposing his life to great danger, before he could get Michol, Saul's daughter, in marriage. It seems also that you must dance attendance for a long time, flatter and do all kinds of service before getting your wives; but perhaps if you had foreseen what sort of a life they would lead you, many of you would have said: "I will not purchase repentance so dearly!"[1] The words of the Wise Man are true: "He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing."[2] And Ecclesiasticus says: "Happy is the husband of a good wife."[3] On the other hand he bewails the misery of those who are tied to worthless wives, and devotes almost two whole chapters, the 25th and 26th, to the subject. I will quote a few passages for you: "A man will choose any plague but the plague of the heart, and any wickedness but the wickedness of a woman.... There is no head worse than the head of a serpent, and there is no anger above the anger of a woman. It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman....Her husband groaned, and hearing he sighed a little. All malice is short to the malice of a woman."[4]

[1] Tanti pœnitere non emo.

[2] Qui invenit mulierem bonam, invenit bonum.—Prov. xviii. 22.

[3] Mulieris bonæ beatus vir.—Eccl. xxvi. 1.

[4] Omnem plagam et non plagam videbis cordis, et omnem nequitiam, et non nequitiam mulieris.... Non est caput nequius super caput colubri, et non est ira super iram mulieris. Commorari leoni et draconi placebit, quam habitare cum muliere nequam...Ingemuit vir ejus et audiens suspiravit modicum. Brevis omnis malitia super malitiam mulieris.—Ibid. xxv. 18-26.

And a great deal more to the same purpose. But, you think, it is too late now to change ; what is done is done, and I must remain by my choice ! Alas, if you have not all your wits about you now, you will have very little chance of preserving conjugal love and union.

How men must act so as to preserve union.

And what are you to do ? I will tell you in a few words, for it is not necessary to give a long instruction on the matter, as I did before to wives. A few words, if you understand them well, will be of great help to you. Learn, then, that in all quarrels, the more sensible gives way, and the stronger yields to the weaker, according to the advice that St. Peter gives you : " Ye husbands likewise dwelling with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life," [1] so as to bear with something from them. Not, however, that you must let them rule over you (for the holy Apostle St. Paul does not allow that ; he says : I do not allow the woman to rule over her husband [2]), but that you may overlook their faults and failings with as much patience as you can, whenever it is lawful to do so. You must often act as if you had neither eyes nor ears, and bear patiently and silently with a fault that is not very injurious to your domestic interests, as if you had not seen it. If your wife is fond of going out into society, see what kind of people she frequents. If they are not dangerous for her, if she only visits her parents, relatives, or well-known acquaintances, then you may be quite satisfied, thinking that it is better to allow that to go on, than to cause a greater evil by trying to prevent it. When a dove flies away from the cote you do not throw stones after her, for fear lest she should not come back. But if the society is dangerous or suspicious, then it is another matter altogether; you must absolutely forbid her to go near it, and must represent to her with kind, but earnest words the danger to her soul, and the disgrace before the people that she incurs, as well as the displeasure and trouble that you are bound to feel at her conduct. If your wife is too avaricious and miserly, think that at all events she will not make you any poorer, and do you be all the more generous to the children, the servants, the poor and needy, and you will thus atone for her fault. Is she too extravagant? You can easily remedy that by not leaving too much in her hands, saying at the same time in a friendly manner, that

[1] Viri similiter cohabitantes secundum scientiam, quasi infirmiori vasculo muliebri impartientes honorem tanquam et cohæredibus gratiæ vitæ.—I. Petr. iii. 7.

[2] Mulieri non permitto dommari in virum.—I. Tim. ii. 12.

your circumstances do not allow of such expenditure, and therefore you must put a stop to it. Is she anxious to have the upper hand and to interfere too much? Then be patient with her; tell her often that she is quite right, and afterwards you can do as you think fit. Is she disobedient and obstinate? Then do not give her any command, but politely ask her to do as you desire, and let her see that you give in to her, not through want of manly courage, but through kindness, conjugal affection, and a love of peace. Is she too fond of talking? Remember that she is a woman, and do not expect miracles from her. Is she passionate, peevish, and quarrelsome? Do not argue with her; if you stir the fire it will blaze all the brighter; be silent and laugh at her in your sleeve; she will soon stop of her own accord. Think, but do not let her know it, of her, as Job said to his wife when she was reviling him: "Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women."[1] The philosopher Socrates says of himself that he paid no more attention to the constant scolding of his wife, Xantippe, than to the creaking of a wheel. If you wish to get the best in a dispute, keep silent. The victory is complete, says St. Valerius, when one remains silent and gives no answer to the other's abusive words. Is she sometimes sulky and cross with you? Pretend to take no notice, and let her come round of her own accord. Finally, often represent to yourself Jesus Christ our Saviour. What has He not to put up with from His spouse the Catholic Church? How cruelly most of its members insult Him! How they dishonor His Name! With what fearful sins perhaps even you have offended Him! And yet He is so patient with His spouse, and loves her so much that He feeds her with His own Body and Blood.

In the same way must you love and bear with the wife that God has given you, although she often may cause you serious annoyance. You will thus be able to increase your merit and your future glory in Heaven. Thank God, too, that your wife is no worse.

Conclusion and exhortation to all married people

I conclude by exhorting all married people to unity in the words of St. Paul already quoted: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church."[2] "Let wives be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."[3] Be obedient, respectful, helpful, and loving to them! Peace be with you![4] Oh, if all of you, husbands and wives,

[1] Quasi una de stultis mulieribus locuta es.—Job ii. 10.
[2] Viri diligite uxores vestras sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.
[3] Mulieres subditæ sint viris suis, sicut Domino. [4] Pax vobis.

were always careful to do your duty properly, what peaceful, pleasant, and happy lives you would have! But since there is no one in the world without certain faults and failings, which are generally the cause of disunion and strife, even between those who would otherwise love each other dearly, I will give another exhortation of St. Paul, which he wrote to the Galatians: "Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."[1] Think that others must bear with the same fault in you: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."[2] Are your wives faulty? Then, husbands, you must bear with them. Are your husbands faulty? Then, wives, you must bear with them; and both of you in patience and Christian charity, for the love of God! Live with each other like the holy couple Zacharias and Elizabeth, to whom the Holy Scriptures give the following praise, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "And they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame."[3] May the bond of love unite your hearts in this short life, in order that it may unite your souls in the long life that is to come! Such is my heartfelt wish for you! Peace be with you.[4] Amen.

THIRTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON JEALOUSY IN THE MARRIED STATE.

Subject.

1st. What jealousy is, and what great mischief it works in the married state. 2d. How married people are to guard against it, and how one is to act, if the other is infected with it.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Tradebat autem judicanti se injuste.—From the Epistle of the day.—I. Petr. ii. 23.

"He delivered himself to him that judged Him unjustly."

[1] Fratres, etsi præoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo delicto, hujusmodi instruite in spiritu lenitatis, considerans te ipsum, ne et tu tenteris.—Gal. vi. 1.

[2] Alter alterius onera portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi.—Ibid. 2.

[3] Erant autem justi ambo ante Deum, incedentes in omnibus mandatis et justificationibus Domini sine querela.—Luke i. 6.

[4] Pax vobis.

Introduction.

"Dearly beloved, Christ has suffered for us, leaving an example that you should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." So far St. Peter, in today's Epistle. My dear brethren, how beautiful it would be for us Christians if we all lived together according to the example of our Model, Jesus Christ! What a happy thing, especially for a married couple, if one knew how to give way to the other! Certainly, peace and union would then be much better preserved, as we have seen already. There is yet another thing that causes much trouble and uneasiness. And what is that? Where the peace and quiet of the married life are not disturbed by quarrelling and contention, they often are by rash judgments and secret injurious thoughts on one side or the other; and that occurs when one suspects the other of being unfaithful: therein consists the jealousy that is often found amongst married people.

Plan of Discourse.

What jealousy is, and what great mischief it works in the married state, I will briefly explain in the first part. How married people are to guard against it, and how one is to act if the other is infected with it, I will explain in the second part of my instruction.

Jesus Christ, who gavest Thyself up in silence, patiently and meekly, to the unjust judgment of wicked men, give Thy grace to all married people, that they may never give cause for such evil judgments, or after Thy example, may learn to bear them with patience. This we ask of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

What jealousy is, and how common.

As worms and moths grow in clothes and eat them away, little by little, so jealousy grows out of love and, like a gnawing worm, eats it away and changes it into hatred. Jealousy is a mental disease which comes from the fear that we have of another getting possession of something that we love, and wish to keep for ourselves: the least interference with the object of our affection disturbs and disquiets the heart and mind exceedingly. Nothing is more common in the world, among all states and conditions, than this malady. The general loves honor and reputation for bravery and heroic actions; a young officer is fortunate enough to van-

quish the foe frequently, and thereby makes a name for himself, and the general at once grows jealous of the young man, and cannot bear him, although the latter has conquered the enemies of his country. The praise that the officer gets grates on the ears of the other, who thinks that his own fame and reputation will suffer thereby. Thus Saul, who formerly loved David, hated him at last so much that he tried to take his life, and the sole cause of his hatred was the jealousy he felt when he heard the people singing in David's praise: "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands."[1] A courtier is jealous of his fellow courtier, on account of the favor and grace of the prince, which he would wish to have for himself alone; one lawyer is jealous of another who gets more cases than he does; a doctor is jealous of another who is more successful in curing disease; a merchant is jealous when he sees another making more profit; a tradesman is jealous of another who possesses more skill in his handicraft. Jealousy is found amongst musicians, painters, and sculptors, on account of their art; amongst parents, on account of their children, and their beauty, cleverness, and talents; amongst women, on account of greater magnificence in dress; amongst students, on account of the highest places in the schools; in private houses, amongst children, if one of them is more caressed by his parents than the other. So unruly and so unmanageable does the love of a thing become, when there are many aspiring to the possession of it.

Nowhere more common and more hurtful than in the married state.

But there is no state in which this fell disease is more easily introduced, and develops more quickly into a mortal illness, than in the married state; and that is because the husband and wife, or either of them, who become infected with that malady, have a twofold, instead of a single love, and that love is a very earnest one indeed. The husband, for instance (and the same may be said of the wife), loves himself and his own happiness best; and next to himself he loves his wife as one who belongs to him alone; hence comes his ardent desire to be alone loved by her, and a great fear and anxiety lest she should share her heart with others, or conceive an aversion for him. If he sees only the least sign of that, he suspects her of being unfaithful, and is much grieved and distressed thereat; this fear, suspicion, and distress are a real mental disease, and constitute what is called jealousy.

This is a source of great

How much mischief this malady causes! In the first place it grievously torments the heart that suffers from it; hardly any

[1] Percussit Saul mille, et David decem millia.—I. Kings xviii. 7.

heavier cross can be found in the married life. Imagine, my dear brethren, a grisly monster with a hundred eyes and ears always open, so as to see and hear everything, and whatever he sees and hears tortures him most cruelly. Imagine that you see a lot of gloomy, melancholy thoughts and suspicions going in and out of the mind, day and night, without ceasing, like ants in their hill, or wasps in their nest. That is a picture of the heart and mind of a jealous husband. He believes that all his suspicions of his wife are true ; that all that he dreads is actually occurring. He watches her every step and movement, he suspects all that she says or does in presence of others. Even if she goes to Church or says her prayers, he puts a wrong construction on it, and if he cannot detect any outward proof of unfaithfulness, his suspicions and fears sink all the deeper into his mind, and cause him unspeakable torture. But there is no use in describing this any further ; they who suffer from it know by experience what a torment it is. Ah, yes ! Temporal losses, misfortunes, poverty, sterility, trouble with children, sickness, illness, and death of children, an ill-tempered husband, an obstinate wife, worthless servants, and other trials of that sort which afflict the married state —all these things are easy to bear in comparison with that heart-gnawing disease, jealousy. No matter how courageous and brave a man may be in bearing all changes of fortune, if he once begins to suspect his wife of being unfaithful, his courage is gone from him. No matter how pious and good a wife may be, and how resigned in bearing crosses and trials, if she grows jealous of her husband, her patience and meekness are turned into fury and wrath, as the Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "A jealous woman is the grief and mourning of the heart. With a jealous woman is a scourge of the tongue which communicateth with all."[1] The Spouse of the Canticles likens this feeling to the pains of hell: "Jealousy is hard as hell."[2]

anguish to one who is infected with it.

Hence, amongst other evils, arise discord, strife, and, in place of ardent love, an implacable hatred between the married pair, along with all the sins and vices which, as we have seen before, disunion causes in the married life. For, how can the husband look kindly on her whose love and fidelity he doubts ? And how can the wife love him who is so suspicious and has such a bad opinion of her, that he watches her every movement ? She will certainly

Disunion between married people.

[1] Dolor cordis et luctus mulier zelotypa. In muliere zelotypa flagellum linguæ omnibus communicans.—Eccl. xxvi. 8, 9.

[2] Dura sicut infernus æmulatio.—Cant. viii. 6.

begin to distrust her husband before long, and to believe that he is subject to the faults he suspects her of. Thus, although she may have been innocent, honorable, and faithful before, she will now venture on things that she would not have dreamt of doing at first. It is against this that Ecclesiasticus warns all husbands: "Be not jealous over the wife of thy bosom, lest she show in thy regard the malice of a wicked lesson."[1] That is, as Father Cornelius à Lapide says: "That she may not really become what she sees you suspect her of being."[2]

Sometimes anger and cruelty.

The world has had terrible experience of the effects of this passion. There have been women whom jealousy worked up to such a pitch of fury that, in order to be revenged on their husbands for suspecting them of unfaithfulness, they tore their own children to pieces before their husband's eyes and cast them at their feet; as we read of Medea. There have been women who, through jealousy of their husbands, cooked their children and served them up at table, nor did they say a word of what they had done until their husbands had unsuspectingly eaten the horrid repast; as the poets write of Progne. Almost all separations of married people have their origin in jealousy. Unhappy, indeed, is the married life, when this fury invades it! And how wicked are you, miserable scandal-mongers, agents of the devil, who delight in telling what you have seen or heard to husband or wife, so as to awaken the suspicions of either and kindle the flame of jealousy between them; a flame which can hardly ever be extinguished afterwards! Christian married people, do all you can to guard against these wicked and mischievous tale-bearers! Love each other constantly, with a true Christian love, which never suspects evil of the beloved one, as St. Paul says: Love suspects no evil.[3] But how are you to act so that this vice may not find place in your hearts? That I will tell you in the

Second Part.

The wife must avoid suspicious company so as to give no cause for jealousy to her husband.

Since either of the married couple can give the other occasion for jealousy and suspicions, so both are bound under pain of sin to avoid everything that could give reasonable cause for uneasiness. You must not pour oil on the fire, or it will blaze up more furiously; if a cloud comes before the sun, it intercepts his rays, and the earth is in darkness. Therefore, the wife must be particularly

[1] Non zeles mulierem sinus tui, ne ostendat super te malitiam doctrinæ nequam.—Eccl. ix. 1.
[2] Ne scilicet adversum te faciat, quod videt, te timere et suspicari.
[3] Caritas non cogitat malum.—I. Cor. xiii. 5.

cautious in this respect, if she sees her husband inclined to be very sensitive, and must carefully avoid all dangerous and suspicious company. The goddess of impure love was once represented by a painter as going on a journey, accompanied by a maid who prepared the way for her mistress. And what sort of a maid was that? Her name was Companionship,[1] and the painter wished to signify thereby that the way is prepared for impure love by being too free and unrestrained in the choice of one's company. Alas, what mischief and sin this unhappy maid occasions among young people of both sexes, who are allowed to see, hear, and speak, laugh and dance with each other, without any restraint, in modern society! And what mischief she works also among even married men and women! There is danger for wives even in the society of those of their own sex, if they are vain and frivolous; and a sensitive or suspicious husband could readily find cause for uneasiness therein, for, according to the well-known axiom of philosophers: "Birds of a feather flock together."[2] And a Spanish proverb says: "Tell me your company and I will tell you what you are," although I may not have had any previous knowledge of your character. There are women who like to show, by their independence and by their impudent manners, that they have the upper hand of their husbands. Such women are fond of going out. They frequent all sorts of company, without caring whether their husbands like it or not; they set themselves up as teachers, without being asked to do so, and undertake to instruct newly-married wives. In what? Here are the beautiful lessons they give: You must not allow yourself to be shut up at home; I would not let my husband do that; you must show that you have something to say; you must be like the rest of the world, or it would have been better for you to have entered a convent. Wherever you go, you must amuse yourself, or else people will think you want to play the wiseacre, etc. You who frequent such company should know, well enough, that you are either already infected with the spirit of it, or that you soon will be. Consequently, you give your husbands, if they are sensitive, sufficient cause to suspect your love and fidelity. Much more should wives avoid free intercourse, and especially solitary interviews, with persons of the opposite sex, no matter who they are; for no matter how innocent such intercourse may be, no matter how innocent it may always remain, still, when it is renewed frequently and without necessity, it gives food for suspicion, not only to the husband, but also to the other

[1] Consuetudo. [2] Omne simile amat sibi simile.

members of the household, although they may not be of a suspicious disposition.

They also frequently give cause for uneasiness by being too vain and frivolous in dress, especially when they appear so in company. For young unmarried women to act thus, and dress beyond their means and station, is certainly very wrong and opposed to the humility of the Gospel, no matter what any one says to the contrary; yet there may be a certain excuse for them, inasmuch as they are looking for some one whom they would be willing to please. Merchants are accustomed to polish up their goods and make them look well, so as to be rid of them all the sooner. But for a married woman, who has already entered on a state of life in which she should seek to please her husband and no other, to give way to vanity in dress, and that not at home either, where her husband alone could see her, but in company and amongst strangers, such conduct must certainly appear very suspicious to a respectable and honorable man.

They must have the fear of God and be kind to their husbands.

Above all, they should have piety and the fear of the Lord, and give their husbands an example therein. The pious are never thought ill of, while, on the contrary, they who are cold in the divine service, worldly in their lives, careless in their devotions, neglectful of confession and holy communion, and remiss in hearing sermons, easily give reason to think that, as they do not serve the Lord their God faithfully, so also they are wanting in fidelity to their husbands. Finally, they must always be friendly and loving towards their husbands, so as to give a proof of the love and affection they have for them. If a wife is always gloomy, unfriendly and distant with her husband, how can he think anything good of her? At least he must doubt the sincerity of her love for him, so that if he loves her as he ought, he will be filled with distressing and anxious thoughts. Sometimes wives complain that their husbands are jealous; that they are too sensitive; that they are always on the watch; that they keep them shut up like nuns in the house; that they never allow them any amusement or society unless in their presence, etc. But we might easily ask those who make that complaint: and how do you behave? Perhaps your conduct is such that your husbands have good reason to mistrust you. Examine yourselves and see whether you have not erred in some of the particulars mentioned already. If that is the case, it is no wonder, indeed, that your husbands are jealous! They would act stupidly and unreasonably otherwise.

The husband must

If the wife is bound in conscience to avoid and shun everything

that could give her husband reasonable cause for jealousy, so also is the husband equally bound to refrain from everything that might give just grounds of suspicion to his wife; and his obligation is even stronger, because, generally speaking, her love is much more sensitive and more exposed to the danger of suspicious fears and jealousy. Ulpianus says that when a wife is accused of being unfaithful to her husband, the judge first tries to find out what sort of a life her husband leads: "For it seems to be very unjust that a man should require in his wife a purity which he himself does not observe."[1] The same thing may be said here. It is useless and unjust for a man to keep his wife locked up at home, while he himself goes about as he pleases, day and night, without having any business to transact that would necessitate his absence from home. It is useless for him to expect her to be humble, modest, and reserved in company, and not to be too friendly with persons of the other sex, while he acts in the opposite way and allows himself the greatest freedom in his conduct and conversation with other women. And that is, unfortunately, only too often the case, and poor wives must sit down quietly and look on, their cheeks burning with shame! It is useless and unjust for him to forbid her all conversation with strangers, unless in his presence, while he is altogether too free in his manner and conversation, even with his own female servants, although his wife is looking on, and must feel troubled and distressed. It is useless and unjust for him to expect her to meet him always with a smiling countenance, while he is stern, gloomy, and harsh in his manner to her. To no purpose does he require her to be pious and devout, in order that she may give no cause for suspicion, if he himself leads a loose, unchristian, and scandalous life, and thereby gives her good reason to doubt his fidelity. No, as far as this matter is concerned, the wife has just as much right as the husband. They must both be, therefore, very careful to avoid everything that is likely to cause suspicion.

also be careful.

Married Christians should herein follow the example set them by the Bridegroom and Bride of the Canticle. What is that? "As the lily among thorns," says the Bridegroom of his Bride, "so is my love among the daughters."[2] Thorns prick and wound if one lays hold of them incautiously, and therefore they must be handled carefully; the lily is held in high esteem as the queen of flowers. The meaning, then, of the Bridegroom is, and all

Both must imitate the Bridegroom and Bride of the Canticle.

[1] Perinquum enim esse videtur, ut pudicitiam ipse ab uxore exigat, quam ipse non exhibeat.
[2] Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias.—Cant. ii. 2.

husbands should be of the same opinion: I honor my bride as the most beautiful flower; I look upon all other women as so many thorns, that I cannot touch without being wounded. And how does the Bride speak? She says: "As the apple-tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons."[1] That is, I consider my bridegroom alone as the fruitful apple-tree that adorns the garden of our household; all other men, rich and poor, old and young, beautiful or deformed, I look upon as wild trees of the forest, which are at such a distance that they can hardly be seen. If all married people followed this example, what peace, good understanding, confidence, and mutual love would be found in the married state!

What is to be done by the other if one is jealous without cause.

Meanwhile, it often happens the wife or the husband gives way to jealousy without any reasonable cause, and shows it by an anxious fear. What is to be done, then, so as to preserve peace and unity? Both must have a sincere compassion for each other, and think that the fear and anxiety are not the result of malice or treachery, but, as is really the case, of a too ardent love that one has for the other. The husband has great reason to rejoice that his wife esteems him so highly that she desires to possess his whole heart and is troubled at the bare thought of a stranger having any share in it; and similarly the wife with regard to the husband. They must rejoice, too, at the preservation of conjugal chastity, of which jealousy is an almost certain sign; for if the wife, for instance, were unfaithful, she would not be much distressed if her husband acted coldly towards her. So, also, the husband would not trouble himself much about his wife, if he were involved in an impure attachment.

How they must act so as to be always free from it.

Finally, in order to avoid this dangerous and loathsome disease, remember the warning and the command of Jesus Christ our Lord: "Judge not."[2] Think no evil of each other. We must look upon our neighbor as good and pious, until we know for certain that he is wicked. Such is the Christian law and the true foundation of Christian charity. It is proclaimed to all men, but especially to married people with regard to each other. Therefore, put away all fears and suspicions, and treat them as mere bugbears of the imagination, as in truth they generally are. The earth is motionless to a healthy eye, but to a diseased one it appears to tremble. Put the best meaning on everything that you hear of, see, and remark in each other, as every Chris-

[1] Sicut malus inter ligna sylvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filios.—Cant. ii. 3.
[2] Nolite judicare.—Luke vi. 37.

tian is obliged to do with regard to his neighbor's actions. If you are sometimes troubled with suspicions of your husband or wife, remember the words that Christ addressed to the Pharisees, who used to interpret everything in a bad sense: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?[1] Do not listen to scandal-mongers, who blow sometimes hot, sometimes cold from the same mouth, when, under the appearance of intimacy or friendship, they tell one of you something suspicious they have seen or remarked in the other. Never be too curious in inquiring into each other's conduct; for, as the proverb says, he who asks many questions gets many different and disagreeable answers. He who is too anxious to know everything will find out a great deal that he would rather not know, and will cause himself much trouble and uneasiness. Plutarch tells us of a laudable custom among the Romans: When a married man was returning from a journey, he used to send on a servant in advance to let his wife know that he was coming. This custom was a prudent one, because it put a stop to all groundless suspicions, and it saved the husband from unpleasant surmises, which he certainly would have had, if on his return he had not found things as they ought to be. Alfonso, King of Spain, used to say: "Then only will the married state enjoy peace and quiet, when the husband is deaf, and the wife blind."[2] What! A deaf man and a blind woman would certainly make a beautiful pair! Yet, so it is: if the husband pays as little attention as if he were deaf to what his wife says to others, and to what others say of her, and if the wife acts as if she had no eyes to see where and with whom her husband goes, and thus they mutually refrain from suspicious investigations into each other's conduct and always put the best interpretation on it, then they will both enjoy undisturbed peace.

Explained by an example.

And St. Jerome says to a jealous husband (and wives may make a similar application of his words): "What is the good of the jealous care with which you look after your wife?"[3] What is the use of it? If she is good and pure, your care is not necessary; if she is not, it will not cause her to amend. Why do you then torture yourself? Barlaam taught Josaphat a similar lesson by means of the following fable: A man once caught a nightingale and was about to twist its neck. Oh, cried the bird, spare my life, and in gratitude I will give you a piece of advice that

[1] Quid cogitatis mala in cordibus vestris?—Matth. ix. 4.
[2] Tum demum matrimonia tranquille exigentur si vir surdus, uxor cæca sit.
[3] Quid tibi profuerit zelus et nimia diligentia in servando uxore tuo?

will often help you during your life. Tell it me, said the man, and I will give you your liberty. Always be careful of three things: never try to catch a thing that will not let itself be caught; never believe a thing that is not probable; never bewail a lost good which you can never recover. The bird was then set free, but no sooner had it recovered its liberty than it perched upon a tree, and spoke thus to the man: Oh, you poor simpleton, what have you done? What a great fortune you have lost; for if you had killed and cut me open, you would have been a rich man for the rest of your life, since I have a pearl as big as the egg of an ostrich in my body. Alas, said the man, would that I had known that at first! Come with me to my house, I will give you a hearty welcome, and the best of food. The bird then laughed at him, and said: What a stupid man you are to forget my advice so soon! Is it likely that I could have such a large pearl in my small body? Why do you believe it then? Do you think I would allow you to catch me a second time? Why do you try to do so? You have lost me and cannot have me again; why do you bewail a loss for which there is no help?

Conclusion and exhortation.

I conclude with the same exhortation to you, married Christians, and I say: Is your husband, oh, wife, or your wife, oh, husband, true to you in conjugal love? Then never believe nor fear that this fidelity will be shaken, for it is not likely that such will ever be the case. Is either of you too incautious and free in conduct! Then the other must not be too anxious and jealous, for such care would be fruitless and profit nothing. Are you certain that you have been betrayed? Then do not trouble nor distress yourself too much about it, but commend yourself to God; for what is done cannot be undone, by any amount of grief or sorrow. Love each other with firm confidence; select as your patrons that most holy married pair, Mary and Joseph. Although the latter was troubled about his spouse, yet, according to the holy Fathers, he never gave way to an evil thought about her, but submitted his reason to a mystery that he could not understand. That he had the idea of sending her away privately, arose, as the same holy Fathers say, from the fact that he was a just man, a title which the Sacred Scripture gives him, and therefore he wished to obey the law. Love your God constantly, and serve Him truly, and there will be no jealousy between you, and you will preserve peace, union, quiet, and heartfelt love, until you both see each other in the city of heavenly peace. Amen.

THIRTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON ADULTERY.

Subject.

Adultery is 1st. An abomination before men. 2d. An abomination before God.—*Preached on Septuagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xx. 16.
"For many are called, but few are chosen."

Introduction.

Terrible saying: "Few are chosen!"[1] What good is it, then, to be called, if one does not arrive at the place to which one is called? This is a matter of interest to all human beings, no matter what their state or condition may be. We are all called by God to a certain state of life, that we may save our souls, and go to Heaven; but how few there are who earnestly work out their salvation according to their state, and consequently, how few there are who go to Heaven! I mean to apply this subject to-day to that state of life of which I have spoken up to the present. I mean the holy state of matrimony. Many enter on that state without first taking counsel with Jesus, and without being called to it by God. What wonder is it, then, that only a few of them save their souls? Many are called to that state, but they do not enter it as they ought, with God on their side. I am afraid that but few of them will be chosen. Many who fulfil these two conditions, do not live as they ought in their state; they do not keep in the friendship of God; they do not fulfil the duties of their state properly; they live in constant strife and dissension, and thus expose themselves to all kinds of vices and sins. I am afraid that but few of them will be chosen. There is one sin in particular, which, when it is committed in the married state, is the most likely to prevent election to Heaven. I hope, my dear brethren, that none of you here present are guilty of that sin. Yet I must speak of it, that all of you may conceive a proper horror and dread of it, although, to tell the truth, I have hitherto shuddered at the idea of saying anything about it. And what sin is it? Adultery. You unmar-

[1] Pauci electi.

ried people, do not go away! This subject is not so circumscribed as might be imagined at first sight: We are all frail and sinful mortals, especially when the opportunity offers; and even the unmarried of both sexes can commit this sin, not merely in deed, but also by a deliberate thought, for, as Christ says: He or she who looks on a married person with an impure desire has already committed adultery in the heart.[1] Christians, be on your guard against that sin! What a terrible crime it is!

Plan of Discourse.

It is an abomination before God and man. Such is the whole subject. It is an abomination before man. The first part. An abomination before God. The second part.

Those who wish, may apply this sermon to any mortal sin, considering every grievous offence as a spiritual adultery against the Holy Ghost, whose light and grace we implore, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels guardian.

There is hardly any sin which in some part or other of the world is not thought little of.

Theft and robbery, murder and assault, gluttony and drunkenness, sorcery and witchcraft, and beastly lust are looked upon as shameful vices by all reasonable men. Yet there are whole nations and peoples in the world who do not look upon such vices as sins deserving of punishment, but openly tolerate them, so that, instead of being ashamed of them, people rather make them a subject for boasting. Tiraquellus writes that among some heathen nations, theft is regarded as a sign of cleverness and skill, and is rewarded by the chiefs; amongst others, it is looked upon as good and honorable to take an enemy's life, so as to satisfy one's wounded honor. Most heathen nations hold sorcery and witchcraft and their so-called priests in high esteem, and all who wish to have a name for wisdom must be well experienced in the diabolical art. In fact, their religion consists in adoring devils, and consulting them on all matters of doubt. Nowadays, in our own country, what account is made of the vice of drunkenness? Many are quite happy at being able to boast of having drunk another down, and brought him to complete intoxication. The Epicureans allowed all kinds of lust among unmarried people, and even in some Christian countries that abominable vice is regarded as a mere human frailty that no one need be ashamed of.

[1] Quia omnis, qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendum eam, jam mœchatus est eam in corde suo.—Matth. v. 28.

Adultery alone is always condemned by every nation.

And yet, mark this, my dear brethren (for in my opinion it proves my subject as clearly as daylight), there is hardly a single nation in the world, not even in the lowest state of humanity, which does not condemn adultery as an abominable crime, and punish it in the severest manner. I will say nothing of the Imperial Law of the Roman Empire which punished with death one who was juridically convicted of adultery. It will be sufficient to consider how even the most savage peoples, who otherwise retain scarcely a vestige of humanity, treat this crime. Historians say of the Parthians: "They punished no crime more severely than adultery."[1] Amongst the Arabs, both the guilty parties were beheaded. The Egyptians burnt them alive. The ancient Romans allowed the husband, whose wife was convicted of this crime, to put her to death as he pleased. The Turks, although they are a most sensual people, cannot tolerate adultery, and woe to the person whom they convict of it! The Peruvians not only burned alive the adulterers, but also put to death their parents, brothers and sisters, and all their blood relations, so that not one of the family in which such a crime was committed should remain alive. The Spartans punished this vice so cruelly that, populous as their country was, there was hardly an adulterer to be found in it. And, therefore, the story is told of a Spartan who was once asked by a stranger how adultery was punished in his country. The Spartan answered: The guilty person must travel through the world until he finds an ox big enough to stand on one side of a high mountain and drink out of the stream that flows on the other side. What nonsense! said the stranger; there is not such a monstrous beast to be found in the world! The Spartan answered: How, then, could you expect to find any one amongst us who would be guilty of such a monstrous crime?

Therefore it must be an abominable sin.

Mark this, my dear brethren, heathen, infidel, wild, and savage nations, who knew nothing of the Christian faith and had not heard of the eternal punishments that divine justice inflicts in the next life, all condemned and punished the vice of adultery. Therefore, I am driven to the conclusion that, if there is hardly any vice, shameful and disgraceful though it be, which some nation or other does not look upon as lawful and honorable, and on the contrary, no nation in the world, no matter how savage and barbarous it is, but condemns adultery and forbids it by severe laws, then it must be that this vice has a special malice and deformity in itself which reason must condemn as abominable.

[1] Nulla delicta adulterio gravius vindicabant.

It is very injurious to the human race in general.

And whence comes the natural horror of this malice and deformity? From the fact that adultery is most injurious and prejudicial to the general welfare of the human race, as Philo says: "Adulterers should be put to death, as public enemies of the human race."[1] And so it is in reality, my dear brethren. The first and chief end of matrimony, for the general welfare, is to continue the human family by bringing up children to succeed as lawful heirs to their parents' property, after the death of the latter. But if adultery were tolerated, what would be the consequence? If, for instance, a married woman were guilty of it, how could the lawful be distinguished from the spurious heirs? And what disorder it causes to have legitimate and illegitimate children living together in the same house, supported and clothed with great labor and trouble by the same father, eating the same food at the same table, and enriched afterwards by the same property, the lawful children being cruelly deprived of their rights by the others! What a number of injustices thus follow on one crime; and injustices which can hardly ever be set right! How could they? Let any one guilty of that crime ask an experienced confessor what is to be done so as to repair the injury. The latter will say, according to the teaching of theologians: You must do all you can to prevent the children whom you know to be illegitimate from sharing in the inheritance of the others; you must economize and refrain from all unnecessary expenses in order to make occult compensation to the legitimate heirs. This is your obligation in conscience, and it also binds your accomplice. What would you think of an answer like that? Ah, it is easy to talk, but it requires skill, trouble, and hard work to do all that; I do not think there is one in a thousand who does it properly. And humanly speaking, it is almost an impossibility to make such atonement that the lawful heirs suffer no injustice whatever. See the trouble that unbridled passion may cause, and what harm it does the whole community.

Hence come many other fearful sins.

Again, what a number of sins of hatred, anger, rage, and despair spring from it, if the husband learns or reasonably suspects that his wife is unfaithful! What a wretched life the married couple then lead! If disunion alone makes the married life a hell on earth, as we have seen before, what will it be if the wife sees that her husband is guilty of adultery, or what is still worse, if the husband knows that his wife is perjured and false to him?

Shown by an example.

Surius, writing of the year 1528, relates the fearful resolve of a

[1] Adulteri capite plectendi, ut publice hostes humani generis.

married man, who had clear proofs of his wife's unfaithfulness: He got into such a rage that he killed, not only his wife, but all the children she had borne to him, crying out in his passion: "Death to all dogs and thieves who break into my house to rob me of what belongs to me! My property is for my own children, not for strangers!" The world has witnessed similar tragic scenes in Spain, Italy, France, and other countries; therefore, with reason does St. John Chrysostom call adultery murder: "Adultery is murder, nay, even worse than murder,"[1] because it brings with it so many crimes that injure not merely one individual, but a whole family, and even a whole community.

Therefore, all Christians must avoid it.

Married Christians, think of this! If you have only a spark of reason left, it should be enough to inspire you with a horror of such an abominable crime; of reason, I say, such as was sufficient for even heathens and savages to condemn and execrate that crime.

Story of a heathen woman.

Mezentius, the tyrant, was as lustful as he was bloodthirsty. When he once heard a young married woman, named Sophronia, praised for her beauty, he sent for her husband and told him of the impure passion he had conceived for his wife. The husband, through fear of death, gave up his wife to the will of the tyrant. Sophronia was told of this and was ordered to come to the court. Wait, said she to the messenger, and let me put on my best attire that I may appear as I ought. She then entered her chamber, took a dagger in her hand, and raising her eyes to Heaven, swearing that she would rather die a thousand times than be untrue to her marriage vow, stabbed herself to the heart and fell dead on the floor. Such was the conduct of one whose husband had, although unjustly, allowed her to commit that crime, and who, therefore, had nothing to fear from him. By consenting to the tyrant's wishes she could have enjoyed the friendship of a monarch; furthermore, she was a heathen who could expect no reward for her virtue in the next life, so that she acted as she did because reason itself had inspired her with horror of such a detestable crime. Oh, holy laws of the Christian faith, where are you! Are there Christian men and Christian women who adore the one, true, living, all-seeing, almighty, omnipresent, all-holy, and just God, from whom they may expect a Heaven of eternal joys if they observe those laws faithfully, while they have the eternal fire of hell to fear if they act against them, and are those very men and women more shameless in this regard than the blind heathens? Alas,

[1] Adulterium latrocinium est, imo omni latrocinio gravior transgressio.

that is only too often the case! What a horrible thing! If they do not fear the laws of men, should not the fear of the divine law at least keep them from so terrible a crime? The fear of the divine law, I say, for that adultery is an abomination to every reasonable man, makes it a shameful thing in the eyes of the world, which is, after all, not saying much. What should touch us Christians most of all is the fact that adultery is an abomination in the sight of God, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Adultery an abomination before God because it sullies the sanctity of the marriage tie.

Every sin, no matter of what kind it is, is an abomination in the sight of God, because He is thereby despised and insulted; yet there is no doubt that some sins are worse in His sight than others, because they are more opposed to the divine goodness and perfections. Of this kind is the sin of adultery, because, in addition to the contempt of the divine law, which forbids all acts of impurity under pain of hell-fire, and besides the many acts of injustice already alluded to, which it occasions, it dishonors and defiles most grievously the sacred bond of marriage, which binds man and wife, in the sight of Heaven and earth, of angels and men, to love and be true to each other, and that bond cannot be severed, as long as they both live, by any civil or ecclesiastical power.

Shown from the Sacred Scriptures.

How hateful the crime of adultery is in the sight of God, is shown by His own words in the Old Testament, in which He calls it a great sin;[1] nay, even the greatest of sins. For Job says: "If my heart hath been deceived upon a woman," I am ready to endure any punishment, "for this is a heinous crime, and a most grievous iniquity."[2] Hear how God threatens all who are guilty of this sin: "Every man that passeth beyond his own bed:.... this man shall be punished in the streets of the city, and he shall be chased as a colt; and where he suspected not, he shall be taken. And he shall be in disgrace with all men, because he understood not the fear of the Lord.[3] So every woman also that leaveth her husband and bringeth in an heir by another; for first she hath been unfaithful to the law of the Most High; and secondly, she hath offended against her husband; thirdly, she hath fornicated in adultery. This woman shall be brought into the assembly, and inquisition

[1] Peccatum grande.—Gen. xx. 9.

[2] Si deceptum est cor meum super muliere;....hoc enim nefas est et iniquitas maxima.—Job xxxi. 9, 11.

[3] Omnis homo, qui transgreditur lectum suum;....hic in plateis civitatis vindicabitur, et quasi pullus equinus fugabitur, et ubi non speravit, apprehendetur. Et erit dedecus omnibus, eo quod non intellexerit timorem Domini.—Eccl. xxiii. 25, 30, 31.

shall be made of her children. Her children shall not take root, and her branches shall bring forth no fruit. She shall leave her memory to be cursed, and her infamy shall not be blotted out." Such are the words of God, in the Book of the Wise Ecclesiasticus.

How great its malice in the Old Law.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus Christ if a man were allowed to put away his wife, or a woman to leave her husband on account of any crime: No, answered our Lord, the bond of marriage can be loosed only by death; but the separation of one from the other, as far as cohabitation is concerned, is only allowed on account of adultery;[1] as we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Mark this, my dear brethren, "except,"[2] by which He meant that no crime or sin of one against the other is grievous enough to allow them to be separated, *unless* one of them commits adultery; for this is the terrible crime on account of which they are allowed to separate. Husbands, are you so unfortunate as to be obliged to live with a peevish, quarrelsome, disobedient, and obstinate wife? It is hard, indeed, and difficult to do so; but patience! you must put up with it. Is your wife idle, vain, extravagant, or given to drink? Then your lot is hard indeed; but patience! you must put up with it. Bear with her faults, punish and correct her as well as you can, but you cannot therefore separate from her. On the other hand, although your wife is cheerful, meek, obedient, prudent, clever, and industrious, have you convicted her of unfaithfulness to her marriage vow? Then away with her; in that case you are allowed to separate from her. Wives, are you so unfortunate as to have to live with a cruel, ill-tempered, or drunken husband, from whom you can expect nothing but suffering and ill-treatment? Have patience, and keep in the friendship of God, and you will be able, by a pure intention, to make your trials a means of gaining Heaven; but you cannot therefore leave your husband on your own authority. If you come to know, however, that he has only once failed against conjugal fidelity, that would be too intolerable a thing to bear, and you are then allowed to leave him and to live alone. Such is the meaning of the words of Christ to the Pharisees, from which we can see what an abomination adultery is in the sight of God.

How much greater in the New Law.

And also, my dear brethren, we can draw the following inference: If even in the Old Law, when matrimony was a mere natural contract, adultery was regarded as a terrible sin, how must God now look upon it, when Jesus Christ has raised the marriage contract above nature to the dignity of a holy sacrament, and in-

[1] Nisi ob fornicationem.—Matth. xix. 9. [2] Nisi.

deed of a great sacrament, as St. Paul says: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church."[1] For it is, as we have seen already, a symbol of the greatest and holiest mystery of our faith, namely, the wonderful union of the divine Word with human nature. It is a symbol of the espousal of Jesus Christ with His spouse the Holy Catholic Church: it is a symbol of the union of the Holy Ghost with the soul of man by sanctifying grace. And besides all this, it is the contracting parties themselves who administer this holy sacrament to each other. As long as they live, therefore, they constitute a sacramental symbol of the most sublime mysteries. Hence, adultery is not merely a sin against purity; not merely a grievous offence against the right that husband or wife has acquired by a contract ratified by God Himself: not merely a mortal sin, or, to speak more correctly, several mortal sins against the just rights of children; not merely a mortal sin, on account of the many sins it causes among married people when one suspects or knows the other to be guilty of it: but in addition to all these, it is a sacrilegious and shameful insult to a great and holy sacrament. If a Catholic were guilty of profaning the sacred vessels, the monstrance, ciborium, or chalice, or of turning a Church into a dancing house or theatre, he would be looked upon by every one as a sacrilegious wretch, and the people would cry out: To prison with him! But what has he done? He has profaned a chalice, or a sacred edifice. Is that all? They are sacred things, indeed, but only because they contain the Blessed Sacrament: What would you think of an adulterer, an adultress, or any unmarried person who sins with one who is married? For such people profane not merely the vessel which contains a sacrament, but the very Sacrament of Matrimony itself.

As appears from the judgment of the Church and the punishment she decrees against it.

Sacrilegious, indeed (according to the Papal decrees), is he or she who dares to profane so holy a sacrament in such a disgraceful manner! "Can any sin be found more grievous than adultery?"[2] Such was the expression of the holy Pope Clement, the disciple and successor of St. Peter, from whom he learned this doctrine. Tertullian was of the opinion that he who committed adultery could have no hope of repentance and forgiveness, no matter what efforts he might make. Although that opinion is very wrong, because it contradicts the infallible teaching of the faith, as well as the divine promises, yet we may learn from it how the early Christians loathed and abominated adultery. A single sin of the kind

[1] Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia.—Ephes. v. 32.
[2] Quid in omnibus peccatis adulterio gravius?

was then punished by a public penance of fifteen years, as we read in the Penitential Canons of St. Basil: For the first four years, he or she who was guilty of that crime, was not allowed to enter a Church, or to associate with the faithful, and was obliged to remain at the Church door, weeping and sighing, begging like a poor mendicant for the prayers of all who were coming in or going out.[1] The five following years the guilty person was allowed to enter the Church, but only to hear the sermon.[2] The next four years he could hear Mass, but had to remain prostrate on the ground among the other penitents.[3] For the next two years he was allowed to assist at all the public devotions, but not to receive Holy Communion.[4] During the whole fifteen years, he had to fast for weeks at a time on bread and water, to wear a hair shirt and to practise other corporal austerities.

God reserves to Himself the proper punishment for this sin.

Can it be, oh, my God, that the sin of adultery was greater and more abominable in those days, than it is now? Hast Thou less horror of it now than Thou hadst then? Alas, how common it is now! And where is the penance, where the punishment for it? Yet we may be sure they will not be wanting, for St. Paul says: "Adulterers God will judge."[5] As if His meaning was: Do not be surprised that the ecclesiastical and civil laws so seldom punish this vice, nowadays, for they cannot see nor find out everything. The sin is committed in secret and privately, so as to hide brutal lust from public view. But, says the all-seeing God, it cannot be concealed from Me; my strict justice will examine and condemn that hateful sin; I will be able to find out all who are guilty of it. "Adulterers God will judge."

Here in this life.

Misery with their own children, as David experienced after having committed adultery, although he had bitterly deplored and repented of his sin; heavy domestic trials and crosses, as David also experienced; public shame and disgrace before the world, as David again gives us an example of; fearful maladies, and distortions of the body, as we read of some adulterous husbands, whose features became terribly deformed after their sin, and of others who were changed into demons, or into wild boars, in which condition they struck terror into every one who saw them. These, and other punishments such as these, are the chastisements that a just God holds over the guilty heads of adulterers, even in this life. Yet these fearful chastisements are only intended as mercies to drive sinners to repentance. There is a still more fright-

[1] Quatuor annis erit defiens. [2] Quinque erit audiens. [3] Quatuor erit substratus.
[4] In duobus consistens sine communione. [5] Adulteros judicabit Deus.—Heb. xiii. 4.

ful doom in store for adulterers. But, oh, God of mercy, are not the other punishments enough? Christians, what think you? If the God of justice always punished every adulterer in that manner, what a crowd of black demons and deformed bodies there would be! How many husbands there are who keep sinful women in their very houses, or sin with their own servants! How many wives who secretly nurture an impure attachment! How many unmarried persons of both sexes who deliberately entertain impure desires with regard to married people! All-seeing God, Thou knowest how many sins of this kind have been committed in the world up to the present time!

In the next life.

But woe to those who are guilty of that sin and do not repent of it sincerely! They will not escape the punishment that God has in store for them in the next life. And what is that? The eternal flames of hell that have been kindled especially for this abomination. The Wise Man says: "But he that is an adulterer shall destroy his own soul."[1] St. Paul says: "Do not err; adulterers shall not possess the kingdom of God."[2] Therefore, they are destined to hell for eternity.

Conclusion and exhortation to the unmarried.

"This is a great sacrament,"[3] is my conclusion, with the same Apostle: matrimony is a great sacrament. Remember this, you who are unmarried, and be careful not to sully its sanctity, even by a deliberate desire; for if you only look at a married person with an impure desire,[4] you have already committed adultery in your hearts. Have a respect for married people, says St. Ambrose: "God Himself is the Guardian of the married state," and since He is present everywhere, and sees all things, "no one can escape His power."[5] "Although, oh, adulterer, you may deceive the husband," so that he knows nothing of your crime, although you may deceive the wife, so that she suspects nothing, "you will not deceive God, who is looking at you."[6] If any one of you is tempted by a married person, do like the chaste Joseph in Egypt, who left his mantle in the hands of his mistress, in order to save his purity by flight. Go away at once from the house in which you are tempted to such a crime, leaving everything behind you, if necessary; and think at the same time, like Joseph: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"[7] How could I commit a crime that God abhors so much?

[1] Qui autem adulter est, perdet animam suam.—Prov. vi. 32.
[2] Nolite errare, adulteri regnum Dei non possidebunt.—I. Cor. vi. 9, 10.
[3] Sacramentum hoc magnum est.
[4] Nam et qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendam eam, etc.
[5] Adest præsul conjugii Deus, quem nullus evadit.
[6] Etsi maritum adulter fefelleris, non falles Deum, etc.
[7] Quomodo possum hoc malum facere, et peccare in Deum meum?—Gen. xxxix. 9.

Mark these words especially, you married people: matrimony is a great sacrament,[1] and you are the constituent parts of it. Never forget the fidelity that you have sworn to each other in the sight of God. If you are assailed by temptation, think and say, like the pious matron of whom Father de la Cerda writes: She was solicited to a sinful act, and full of indignation, she cried out: What do you ask of me? If you desired something that was my own, I could grant your request if I chose, but now I belong altogether to God and to my husband. Husbands, love your wives; wives, love your husbands—love each other, as Christ loved the Church;[2] that is, with a love pure, true, and constant till death. Keep steadfast in that love with your children, in the fear and love of God, that you may all live together in the eternal joys of Heaven. Amen. To married people.

THIRTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE UNNECESSARY TROUBLES OF MARRIED PEOPLE.

Subject.

1st. Some married people trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. 2d. Others trouble themselves when they should rather rejoice.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Vos autem contristabimini.—John xvi. 20.
"You shall be made sorrowful."

Introduction.

The ordinary, and, as I think, beautiful salutation among the ancient Greeks, when meeting one another in the street, was: "May you do well and be joyful."[3] In our days, we have other forms of greeting, such as: Good morning, good evening, good day, a happy new year, or if one is going anywhere, a pleasant journey; or if one wishes to pay compliments, he says, your servant, your most obedient, etc., and most frequently these expressions are mere empty words, and nothing more. Good Christians, when they meet, have now the praiseworthy custom of saying: "Praised be Jesus Christ;" and would that it was always said with proper rev-

[1] Sacramentum hoc magnum est.
[2] Viri diligite uxores vestras, sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam. [3] Bene agere et gaudere.

erence, which is not always the case, so that some dishonor that most holy Name, instead of honoring it. Although I give the preference to this last salutation, yet I now address you after the manner of the Greeks, and wish, my dear brethren, that you may do well and be joyful.' This is my heartfelt wish for you especially, married Christians, and I wish most earnestly that I could really cause you to feel this most desirable joy. But our Saviour has said something else to all His elect who do good and try to live piously: "You shall be made sorrowful."[2] In the married state, especially, as you well know, there are, now and then, reasons enough for sorrow. Either the marriage is unfortunate, so that you do not live peacefully together—and that is, indeed, a great cross, as you have heard already—or if it is fortunate, so that you live in peace and love together—and that is great good luck, indeed—yet you often find things to trouble you, some of which give you reasonable cause for sorrow, and therefore make you deserving of pity, and I will try to console you for them next Sunday; while you yourselves make crosses and troubles of others without any necessity, nay, sometimes even when you should have rejoiced at them. This shall form the matter of to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Some married people trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. Oh, do not do that! Such will be the first part. Others trouble themselves when they should rather rejoice. What a foolish proceeding! The second part. Do well in the sight of God, and be joyful in the Lord, will be the concluding wish.

Which may the God of mercy effect in all through the merits of His Mother Mary, and the holy angels guardian.

What and of how many kinds sadness is.

Sadness is a pain and perturbation of mind, on account of a suffering from which one wishes to be freed, or on account of an unsatisfied desire. St. John Damascene distinguishes four kinds of sadness: The first is when one is troubled at seeing or knowing of the sufferings and misfortune of another; thus, the mother is troubled at the pain her child suffers, the friend on account of his friend's misfortune, and every kind-hearted man at the misery of his fellow-man. This sadness is called compassion or pity. The second is, when one is troubled at another's well-being, because, for instance, the other is richer, more learned, or happier. Such was the case with Joseph's brethren when they saw him more

[1] Bene agere et gaudere. [2] Vos autem contristabimini.

richly dressed than they were. This is envy. The third is when one is grieved at what he believes to be an injustice, or a thing that should not occur, although it may not concern him. Thus, many a one is grieved at a manifest wrong, or because another is intrusted with a charge that he is not fitted for, and so on. This is called indignation. If this is caused by something contrary to the honor due to God, it is called pious zeal. The fourth kind of sadness is the grief that every one feels in contradictions that affect himself, and that trouble either the soul or the body. Thus, the merchant is grieved at the losses he has suffered, or because he has not gained a law-suit; an honorable man is grieved at an insult offered him; a husband is grieved at the death of his wife; the wife at the death of her husband; the parents at the illness or death of their children, etc. And this is what is properly called sadness. None of these four kinds is of any use when it is excessive, or when it comes from an unreasonable cause; and it is one of the rarest arts in the world, as Plato says, to know how to be sad, and how to be joyful, at the proper time, and in the proper degree.[1] Oh, if all men, and especially married people, understood this art thoroughly, and used it properly, how much chagrin and unnecessary trouble would be avoided! I must repeat what I have said before, that many things occur in the married state which give just cause for trouble and sadness, but it is true, nevertheless, that many people make their troubles greater than they ought to be; nay, they often trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. They seek troubles with a lantern, so to speak, and bring them into their houses, contrary to the warning of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."[2]

Many trouble themselves about what does not concern them.

I will not say anything of those who annoy themselves about things that do not at all concern them; like that malefactor who, while he was being led to the gallows, kept on grumbling and murmuring the whole way. And what was he grumbling about, my dear brethren? About having to die such a shameful death, as any one would imagine? That would, indeed, be a rational subject for discontent; but that did not trouble him. He was annoyed because the streets were not better kept, and were allowed to be encumbered with all sorts of rubbish. Oh, foolish man, how do the streets concern you? Leave the care of them to the other citizens, who must walk on them many times a day and often ex-

[1] Tristari et gaudere, sicut oportet.

[2] Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ, et non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo.—Eccl. xxx. 22.

perience the inconvenience of them. What is it to you whether the streets are clean or dirty, well or ill kept, since you will never walk on them again? Any street is good enough to walk to the gallows on. In almost the same manner do many make troubles and annoyances for themselves, and grumble at things that they have, so to say, picked up in the streets. Look, they say, what a grand house such a one has built, as if he wished to spite us and other decent people! See how finely that woman and her daughters are dressed, and what airs they put on, as if we did not know them! It is enough to make one cross; could not we do the same if we chose? If I could not fill that office better than such a one, I would not undertake it; he is only fit to annoy the people, etc. They trouble themselves with things of this kind, and sometimes to such an extent that they become quite unhappy and discontented. Why do you plague yourselves about such foolish things? I must ask you, as Christ said to Peter, who was troubled at the thought of what would become of his fellow-Apostle John: "What is that to thee?"[1] Why do you trouble yourself with the concerns of others? Have you nothing to annoy you at home? If you have not, you ought to live in peace and be cheerful. Do not seek for troubles,[2] especially in matters that do not concern you: "And afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."[3]

Others about mere fancies, like Jonas.

Another source of trouble, common enough amongst married people especially, even when they live together in harmony, is that they make crosses and trials for themselves in their own imaginations, where in reality none exist, or they make mountains out of molehills; thereby showing the truth of what Seneca says: "We are often more troubled at fancied trials than at real ones,"[4] like horses that are afraid of their own shadow on the road. We have an example of this in the Sacred Scriptures, in the Prophet Jonas. Behold him seated alone, full of sorrow and affliction: "And Jonas was exceedingly troubled and was angry."[5] Poor prophet! what is the matter with you, that you weep and lament so? Here is what ailed him, my dear brethren: At the command of God he had gone through the great city of Ninive, and foretold its destruction to its inhabitants in these words: "Yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed."[6] But since the people, terrified at the prophecy, had done penance and repented for their sins, God was appeased and, recalling the sentence he had pronounced, resolved

[1] Quid ad te?—John xxi. 22. [2] Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ.
[3] Et non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo. [4] Sæpius opinione quam re laboramus.
[5] Afflictus est Jonas afflictione magna, et iratus est.—Jon. iv. 1.
[6] Adhuc quadraginta dies, et Ninive subvertetur.—Ibid. iii. 4.

to spare the city. Jonas, meanwhile, was anxiously awaiting the fortieth day, as that on which his prediction was to be fulfilled. He looked up to Heaven and down to earth, hoping to see some sign that his prophecy was coming true, but in vain! The fortieth day passed, and several more days also, and Ninive was still untouched. That was what troubled Jonas so much. Filled with shame, and hiding his face so that no one might recognize him, he slunk out of the city into a deserted place, and there commenced his lamentations: What, he said, am I the preacher and prophet, to be thus put to shame? I have been told to announce an event that was sure to happen, and now the contrary takes place; thus I am a false prophet, that is my reward: "Oh, Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live,"[1] and to bear my grief and my shame together.

He had no cause for sorrow.

"Ah, Jonas, Jonas," said God to him, "dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry?"[2] Is that the whole cause of thy trouble? What greater consolation could there be for a preacher than to see his hearers shed tears of repentance, amend their lives, and escape the punishment they were threatened with by God? You should rejoice at having done your work so well, but instead of rejoicing you are troubled so much as to desire death! Dost thou think thou hast just cause for thy anger? There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that Jonas had no reason for sorrow, but rather much reason for joy. His trouble came solely from his own imagination. He thought that the whole city would look upon him as a false prophet who had betrayed the people and made them fast and do penance for nothing; whereas the contrary was really the case. St. Ephraim represents the Ninivites as speaking thus: "Grieve not, oh, Jonas, but rejoice that we now lead a new life,"[3] that thy preaching has moved us to do penance, and has turned aside from us the wrath of God. We look upon thee as our greatest benefactor, by whose warning we have received light and grace. Meanwhile, Jonas was in a despairing state. So great was his affliction that he wished for death to escape the shame that overwhelmed him when he thought that the whole city would consider him a false prophet.

Such is the conduct of many, es-

How many there are who might be asked the same question: "Dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry?" You, oh, hus-

[1] Domine, tolle quæso animam meam a me, quia melior est mihi mors, quam vita.—Jon. iv. 3.
[2] Putasne, bene irasceris tu?—Ibid. 4.
[3] Noli contristari, O Jona! sed gaude, quod novam vitam agimus.

pecially married people, when they make trouble for themselves by their own fancies.

band, who give way to all sorts of fancies if your wife only turns her head aside, or if she fails to meet you in her usual friendly manner; do you think that you have reason to be angry? You, oh, wife, if your husband, occupied with other cares, appears before you with a stern countenance, or gives you a short answer without meaning any harm, immediately think that his love is growing cold or that he despises, neglects, or hates you; then the two of you go about the whole day, gloomy and ill-tempered, not speaking a word to each other, and tormenting yourselves to such an extent that you can hardly sleep at night, and if the cause of all this trouble is sought for, it will be found to exist merely in the imagination. In the same way, they trouble themselves frequently at the bare idea and imagination of a trial that may come upon them. For instance, the husband is away from home, or the son is in a foreign country. If a letter does not come on the very day appointed, then the wife at once begins to imagine that there is something wrong. Her husband has certainly met with some misfortune; her son is very sick, or perhaps dead, or something else has happened to him. With such thoughts as these they torture themselves day and night, they mourn as dead those who are living, they bewail the sickness of those who are strong and healthy, or the misfortune of those who are quite safe and prosperous, until at last the news comes that they have been weeping and wailing for nothing. Meanwhile, they have been tormenting themselves, for no other reason but what their own foolish fancies suggested. If they had waited a little longer until the good news came, they would have escaped all that suffering; and even if their worst fears were realized, it would have been time enough to give way to their affliction when they heard that there was reason for it, and so they would have avoided suffering the same sorrow twice over, or they would not have had it for such a long time.

Or among themselves about what may happen.

Do you think that you have just reason to trouble yourselves, you married people, if one of you has a slight cold or an attack of fever, or if one of your children is thus affected? Yet, what moaning and lamentation you make, excited thereto by your own gloomy fancies! If the child were to die, all my consolation in this world is gone! What would become of me if my husband died! What would become of my children—how could I support them! There would be no hope for me, I should despair! In that way they torment themselves for weeks and months, as long as the illness lasts, at the bare idea of trials that may come upon them in

certain circumstances, but which perhaps will never come at all. In the name of God, what is the use of that? Wait until the trial has come upon you; then it will be time enough for you to commence to trouble about it; there is nothing gained by doing so beforehand. Your child, your husband, or your wife will, in all probability, recover, so your long fretting is to no purpose. In the same way, generally speaking, they act when events occur which give them just cause for uneasiness, but they exaggerate things and make them worse than they are. For instance, the husband, the child, the friend is dead; that is, I must confess, a hard trial, but they make it harder. Oh, they say, if we had called in another doctor; if we had tried the medicine that a good friend recommended to us, perhaps he would now be alive and well! Yes, perhaps, and perhaps not. He is dead; what is the use of your perhaps? If they have used every means possible, they say: Oh, what a pity that we plagued the poor man with so many medicines and so much blood-letting. It did him no good, and he would not have been so much troubled! Perhaps, even, it was the medicine or the blood-letting that caused his death; if that is the case, we are to blame! There you have another perhaps. No matter what they do, they are not satisfied. Why do you trouble yourselves about things of which you can know nothing? The man is dead; weep for him if you have cause to do so, but put those foolish notions out of your head! So true is it that they who have no one else to torment them, torment themselves. But what an unreasonable thing it is to make for ourselves trials that we always try to avoid! "Afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."[1]

In these cases the imagination must be kept in check and you will avoid much affliction. Yes, you say, but how? That is a difficult thing to do. Where is the difficulty? When you look at the moon you would be inclined to say that it is much larger than any of the stars in the firmament, although, in reality, the smallest star is much greater in size than the moon. An ignorant person would not believe this, yet it is the firm conviction of every one who knows anything of astronomy. If you are sailing down the Moselle in a boat and fix your eyes on the town of Treves, you would imagine, although you know better, that it is the town that is moving and not the boat. No matter how small the stars appear to you, you know that they are greater than the moon, because you have often heard so from those who understand the subject. How easily, then, you may correct, with your

In such circumstances these people must repress their fancies, in order to live in peace.

[1] Non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo.

understanding, the error into which you are led by the imagination! In the same way you should accustom yourselves, in the cases above mentioned, and in similar ones, to keep the imagination in check, so as to preserve your cheerfulness and quiet. Think and say to yourself: I have tormented and plagued and worried myself so often during my life, for a mere imaginary cause, and nearly always I have found that the contrary to what I dreaded really occurred; it is possibly the same with me now. Therefore, I will not be so foolish as to trouble myself, until I know for what. How often have I not thought that my neighbor or friend was deliberately insulting me, because he passed me by once without saluting, or because, on some occasion or other, he did not speak to me, or because he let fall a dubious expression here and there. How often have I not thought that my husband or my wife was cross with me on account of a mere unfriendly look; and yet there was no cause for all this apprehension, so that I annoyed myself to no purpose; this is just a similar case. How often have I feared that my husband, my wife, my child, or my friend had met with some mishap, or even with death itself, and behold, they are all alive and well! And so will it now be in this apparent danger, in this misfortune that I dread: it will all turn out well in the end; therefore I will wait, patiently and quietly, and recommend the future to God. You see now how easy it is to avoid many crosses that you make for yourselves in your state of life. If you do not do so, you are not to be pitied, because you do not try to make things better. There are others who think they have cause for sorrow, when they should really rejoice. These I will speak of in the

Second Part.

Others trouble themselves when they should rejoice.

Children are the most fruitful cause of unnecessary trouble in the married life. Some people cannot be consoled, because they have no children; others, because they have too many; others, again, because their children die young. Let us see, now, whether they have cause for sorrow, and not rather for joy and consolation.

First, those who have no children.

The first have no children, although they wish very much to have them. It is true that the principal end of the married state is to bring up children in the service of God, and to lead their souls to Heaven, that they may praise God and bless Him for all eternity. It is true that children, when they are good, are the crown and joy of their parents, and therefore, in the Old Law, unfruitfulness was looked upon as a great misfortune, nay, even

as a shame and disgrace. How afflicted Anna, the wife of Elcana, was on account of her barrenness! She could not eat or drink; her daily occupation was to weep and sigh because she had no children, so that at last her husband said to her: "Anna, why weepest thou, and why dost thou not eat?"[1] As we read in the First Book of Kings, 1st chapter. And Rachel, too, how troubled she was, so that, like Jonas, she longed for death! I must have children, she said to her husband, "otherwise I shall die."[2] Now, although sterility is to be attributed to natural causes, yet it certainly depends on the decrees of God's providence, and therefore the Patriarch Jacob answered the complaints of Rachel by saying: "Am I as God, who hath deprived thee of the fruit of thy womb?"[3] This one consideration should be sufficient to console married Christians.

They have reason to rejoice at being free from many obligations.

And meanwhile, I ask all who thus trouble themselves, do you think you have just cause for sorrow?[4] You should rather rejoice; for, in the first place, how many duties, cares, obligations, fears, and anxieties you escape, which fathers and mothers must suffer, precisely because they have children! To say nothing of the inconvenience and discomfort they have to put up with, day and night, while their children are still very young. What a great responsibility is theirs, if they do not bring up their children in a Christian manner! How great their trouble and anxiety if their children get sick! How deep their affliction, if they die! How profound their grief, if their children are deprived of their reason, or suffer some other defect! And what a trial it is when they are disobedient, wicked, disrespectful, and obstinate! What care and labor it takes to feed and clothe them decently! See from what God has freed you. You can enjoy your liberty and use your solitude, in order the better to devote your time to the service of God and the salvation of your souls. Is not that a great advantage?

They can also employ their wealth better.

But perhaps you are wealthy, and are therefore sorry that you have no heirs to whom you may leave your possessions. Why should that annoy you? If you wish, you can find heirs enough, to whom it will be far better for you and more useful for your souls to leave your money. There are some birds that rear the young of other birds, as if they were their own; as we know to be the case with hens, that often rear ducklings. How many

[1] Anna, cur fles, et quare non comedis?—I. Kings i. 8.
[2] Alioquin moriar.—Gen. xxx. 1.
[3] Num pro Deo ego sum, qui privavit te fructu ventris tui?—Ibid. 2.
[4] Putasne, bene irasceris tu?

poor orphans there are, who, on the death of their parents, are abandoned by every one! They have neither money, nor food, nor clothing. It is of them that Jesus Christ has said: "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me."[1] Take them into your house, then, or at least into your care; provide for their wants. They will certainly, in their gratitude, look upon you as their father and mother, and they will be to you as children, to replace those whom you anxiously ask from God. You can adopt as many of them as you wish, and in their persons you can feed and clothe Jesus Christ Himself. Do you wish for some one to inherit your property when you die? How many poor people there are here and there, and perhaps in your very neighborhood, who are in want, and may, unknown to others, be without anything to eat, because they are ashamed to beg! They, too, represent the Person of Jesus Christ. Make them your heirs; you will lose nothing by them, but will gain a great deal. They will make over your property to Heaven, so that you will be able to live on it forever. And in that way, too, Jesus Christ will be your heir and your inheritance.

Example of a pious couple in Rome.

Or act like that pious and noble couple in Rome who, after praying a long time fruitlessly for offspring, made the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Heaven, their heiress, and daily besought her to make known to them how they should dispose of their wealth in her honor. This request was so pleasing to the Mother of God, that in the middle of summer she caused snow to fall miraculously in a certain place, as a sign that they should build a Church there to her. They obeyed the sign and erected on the spot a magnificent temple which bears the name *Maria ad Nives* to this day, and the feast of its consecration is celebrated every year on the 5th of August. From that you may see, married Christians, that you have no reason to grieve, but rather much reason to rejoice, if God leaves you childless.

Others who have too many children.

Just as they who have no children bewail their lot, so also, they who have a numerous offspring groan under the burden, and complain that they have neither time nor means to bring them up properly.

They, too, may rejoice, for they have no just cause for trouble.

But even you, if you think of the matter sensibly, have more cause for consolation than for sorrow. For, with regard to the annoyance and want of time, of which you complain, tell me, are you so badly off after all? There is a shopkeeper who must spend the whole day at his business; he is hardly out of bed in the early

[1] Qui susceperit unum parvulum talem in nomine meo, me suscipit.—Matth. xviii. 5.

morning when he hears people knocking at the door, who want to buy something ; while he is attending to them, others come, and so it goes on from morning to night; customers are constantly coming in; one wants this, another that; his house is always full of people, so that he has hardly time enough to take his meals, and in the evening he is not able to stand for weariness. What do you think of his case? It is truly very hard for the poor man to bear it ! But did you ever hear a shopkeeper complain that too many customers come to him? I should think not ; for on that his business depends. The more customers he has, the better pleased he is, and although they give him trouble, he is always glad to see them. He looks upon the trouble as nothing, provided he can make more money by it. Christian married people, what is the end and aim of the married state? I have told you already. The principal reason why you have chosen that state is to bring up children in the service of God. That is your principal duty, by performing which you will render a most pleasing service to God and will save your souls; that is your chief business, by which you can gain great glory in Heaven for yourselves and your children. So that, if you have many children, are you to be afflicted therefore? Certainly the annoyances, difficulties, and cares of your state will be increased. One child is crying out for something here, another there ; one wants this, another that, etc., and the parents often do not know which they are to attend to first. But it is in these very trials that your business consists. The more souls you can bring to Heaven, the greater your gain and merit for eternity, and therefore you should rejoice at the good opportunity you have in your numerous offspring. But, you think, it is easy to talk ; if there are many children, they will require a good deal of food and clothing, and where is it to come from?

As far as support is concerned.

Be satisfied! God, who sends you many to be fed, will also send you food for them, if you manage matters properly. Bring up your children as well as you can; some for a profession, others for an honorable trade or business. Let none of them be idle; where there are many to work, there are many to earn. Only serve God, and put your confidence in Him as your heavenly Father, as I have often told you, and He who fed the five thousand with a few loaves of bread will not allow you or your children to suffer want; if you are only true to Him. The number of your children is also a help to you in this respect, and an incitement to serve God better. If you had only a few, you would in all probability lead an idle, luxurious, and therefore unchristian life. You would spend a con-

siderable sum in dress and in eating and drinking. You would be fond of going out and so might perhaps bring your children into sin and vice, and thus lead them to hell. But now, since you have a numerous offspring, all these things are impossible for you. The days seem too short for you, and you find work enough in your own house, so that you have not to seek pastime elsewhere. You all pray together every day and send up your petitions to Heaven for temporal and spiritual prosperity. Rejoice, therefore, and be glad in the Lord!

Those whose children die young.

The third and last class of married people who trouble themselves without cause, consists of those whose children die young. If the tree puts forth many blossoms, if the vine promises to bear well, we are more grieved when a frost or a hail-storm puts an end to our hopes, than if we never had any reason to hope, such as would be the case if the fruit-tree or the vine perished in mid-winter. Such is also the case with parents: they bewail their misfortune, if their children die in the bloom of youth, just at the time when they promised to be a support and comfort to their parents for many years to come, far more than if they had no children at all. Alas, so I seem to hear them, especially the mother, sigh and lament: My only son; what a charming child he was! And now he is dead! My poor little daughter! I loved her most of all my children, and now she is dead, and all my consolation is gone with her! I am almost inclined to despair when I think of it! I shall not forget her as long as I live! Oh, what a trial, what a cross! What misery and affliction! Oh, poor, afflicted people, certainly the hand of God lies heavily upon you! Could there be a greater sorrow upon earth? No, it is impossible that there could be! Weep, therefore, and bewail your misery as much as you please; but if I were looking at you, instead of pitying you, I should be inclined to laugh, or if I had to show pity outwardly, it would be, not for your sorrow, but for your folly. Do you think you have cause to afflict yourself so excessively?[1] Excessively I say, because it is natural, and no parent is to be blamed for it; it is natural to be sorry for the death of a child. But I ask you again, have you any occasion for such *excessive* sorrow? In truth, if ever there was occasion for consolation and joy, it is this; for in addition to all the advantages which they have, as we said before, who are without children, they who have a child in Heaven have a consolation and joy that the others are without. And must I ask you why you brought into the world that child

[1] Putasune, bene irasceris tu?

whose death you deplore? Was it that it might live a long life here below? No, certainly, that would not be enough; its only end was Heaven, its eternal country, and your duty, strictly defined for you by the Almighty God, was to lead it there by every means in your power. And you have attained your object, your dear child is where it ought to be, and where you were bound to lead it. And yet you are so overwhelmed with sorrow!

That they have reason to rejoice proved by a simile.

Tell me, if your son or daughter were grown up and had to take a long journey to a far-off city, by a long and dangerous road, on which you know by experience that many have met with accidents, riding or driving, and many have been attacked and killed by robbers; in what anxiety would you not be until you hear that your beloved child has arrived in safety? Suppose, now, that your son had met with an unexpected piece of good luck on the way, that he had been taken up into a coach, and so had been able to finish his journey a week sooner than you expected, how would you act on hearing that news! Would you weep and lament? Would you tear your hair, and cry out, alas, my son has arrived at his journey's end a week sooner than I thought! Why did he not go on foot? Do you think you would act in that manner? Certainly not; it is only fools who would do so. No, your joy would be all the greater because your son arrived so quickly, and accomplished his dangerous journey in safety. Now, with regard to your child's early death, remember this: as long as we mortals are on earth, we are on a journey. The city to which we are tending is the heavenly Jerusalem. The way leading thither is this vale of tears, in which we are exposed to all sorts of accidents that threaten the body, such as sickness, weakness, cares, trials, and difficulties; and in which there are still worse and more numerous dangers and temptations surrounding our souls on all sides, and exposing us to eternal perdition. The greater number of travellers perish on the way, and are dragged down to everlasting fire by the demons, the robbers of souls. Should we not, then, desire a happy termination to such a dangerous journey? Should we not rejoice when we hear that one whom we love has reached the heavenly City? Christian parents, your dear son, or daughter, was also on that journey. Who knows what would have happened to your child if it had spent many more years here below? Who knows whether it would have reached Jerusalem, or have been dragged off to Babylon by the infernal spirits? The good God has, in His mercy, by a special favor, taken it up in His chariot, so to speak, and brought it quickly to

the end of its journey; and perhaps He has done so because He foresaw that you, in your excessive fondness, would rear up your child badly and cause the loss of its soul. As it is, your beloved one is safe, and has escaped all dangers and troubles of soul and body; for you may be certain now, what you could not be otherwise, that your child, dying in its baptismal innocence, is rejoicing with God in Heaven, and consequently, that you have an intercessor there to whom you may pray in private. Do you weep and lament at hearing news like that? Where is your common sense, if so? You should rather thank the divine mercy, rejoice at your child's good fortune, and say with St. Francis Borgia, when he heard that his daughter was dead: "The Lord lent her to me and He has taken her back again,"[1] and I know now that she is in His hands.

Conclusion and exhortation to be resigned to the divine will.

Certainly! And my conclusion will be to you in the words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus, already quoted: "Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."[2] Married Christians, make no sorrow for yourselves (the sorrow for past sins alone excepted) which is not helpful to the service of God. Do not torment yourselves by your own fancies where you have no reason to be troubled, much less when you have rather reason to rejoice. The married state brings cares and troubles enough with it; do not make unnecessary cares for yourselves. If you have nothing else to suffer, think that by your unreasonable cares you may force the Almighty to send you some of the real crosses and trials that others have to bear, and then you will have cause enough to mourn and lament. You are like a little child that sits crying at the door, until its mother runs out and asks: What is the matter with you? Who has done anything to you? But the child continues to cry until the mother gets vexed and at last take the rod and gives the child a good beating, saying to it: There, now you have something to cry for. I tell you, therefore, to be careful that God does not act with you in the same way. And now: "Do well and rejoice,"[3] and as St. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always,"[4] in a good conscience, and in a virtuous and Christian life, which will bring you safely from this life to eternal joy. Amen.

[1] Depositum acceperam, repetiit Dominus.
[2] Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ, et non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo.
[3] Bene agere et gaudere. [4] Gaudete in Domino semper.—Philip. iv. 4.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE CONSOLATION OF MARRIED PEOPLE IN TROUBLE.

Subject.

1st. Consolation in the trials caused by children. 2d. Consolation in the trials caused, even involuntarily, by one of the married couple.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Quia haec locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum. —John xvi. 6.

"Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart."

Introduction.

The disciples of Jesus Christ seemed to have good reason for sorrow and trouble, when they learned that their beloved Master was about to leave them and to go to Heaven; and yet, as Eternal Wisdom declares, it was good for them that He should leave them: "It is expedient to you that I go,"[1] so that the disciples had more reason to rejoice. In the same way, many married people trouble themselves without cause, or even when they have cause to rejoice; as we have seen in the last sermon. But there are also many real troubles in the married state, which must be borne with patience. How married people are to console themselves under these, and how they are to make them lighter, will be the subject of the present instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

Consolation in the trials caused by children. The first part. Consolation in the trials caused, even involuntarily, by one of the married couple. The second part. Complete resignation to the will of God in all trials. Such is the conclusion that I wish myself and every one to draw.

Thereto give us Thy grace, oh, Jesus Christ, Consoler of the afflicted, through Thy Virgin Mother and the holy angels guardian.

A great trouble for married

Married people have different kinds of troubles to suffer from their children: for the latter may be wicked and unruly; or they ma

[1] Expedit vobis ut ego vadam.

people is to have ill-reared children.

be weakly and delicate; or through poverty, there may be a lack of means to support them properly. These three kinds of trials are very hard for parents to bear, and, since they give just reason for anxiety, they require, in my opinion, great patience. And first, if the children are wicked and unruly, that is a heavy cross indeed! Solomon says: "I hated all my application wherewith I had earnestly labored under the sun."[1] And why so, oh, wisest of kings? "Being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool:"[2] that is to say, whether he will be pious or wicked. Oh, certainly, it is good reason for anxiety not to know how thy son will act after thy death! How would it have been with thee, if thou hadst seen (as was really the case) thy wicked son Roboam bringing thy happy kingdom to destruction? In truth, many parents have been grieved to death by the conduct of their children. The Emperor Severus, as we read in history, died through grief at the dissensions of his sons, and the trouble they caused him. Marcus Aurelius Antonius starved himself to death, because he saw that his son Commodus was a cruel and savage man. And yet, what wonder is it that Solomon, who was unfaithful to God, and the two last named, who were impious persecutors of the Christians, should have wicked and impious children? As the tree, so the fruit. And, therefore, Christian parents who give their children bad example, are not much to be pitied, when the latter follow in their footsteps; they are the cause of their own troubles. But what a sad thing it is for pious parents, who have tried to rear their children well, by duly chastising them and giving them a good example of piety and virtue, to see that they turn out disobedient, obstinate, reckless, given to lying, cheating, cursing, drinking, immorality, and other vices, and are therefore on the high road to hell? Could there be a greater trial than this for a pious father and mother?

Consolation for such parents.

Yet, you must not despair! Your grief should in part be mitigated by the thought that you have done your duty, and that you have not been wanting in your parental obligations. God does not require any more from you. If all your labor and trouble profit little with your wicked child, at all events, your future reward will be none the less, but will rather be increased, on account of the anxiety you suffer. In the same way, a preacher

[1] Detestatus sum omnem industriam meam, qua sub sole studiosissime laboravi.—Eccles. ii. 18.

[2] Habiturus hæredem post me, quem ignoro, utrum sapiens an stultus futurus sit.—Ibid. 18, 19.

is often obliged to comfort himself, when he sees that his spiritual children, whom he desires to lead to God by his instructions, hardly ever come to hear him, or if they do listen to him, refuse to obey and to do what he tells them. He must then say to himself: At least I have done my duty; I cannot compel others to profit by my teaching, nor is it my duty to do so; they are responsible before God for what they do. It is just like the official who is ordered by the magistrate to publish a command or a prohibition on certain days, in the public streets. The official does as he is told; whether many or few people come to hear him, or whether they observe the law he publishes, or not, is nothing to him; and if the people afterwards break the law and are punished, they must blame themselves. Nor would it be of any use for them to plead ignorance; they could and should have known the law, since it was made public. In the same way, you must console yourselves, Christian parents, as far as the salvation of your souls is concerned; and, although you have just cause to pity your miserable children, who wilfully ruin their souls, still you must never despair of their conversion. Do like the pious Job, who arose every morning and offered sacrifice for each of his children, for fear lest they should have offended God. Pray daily and fervently that God, who holds the hearts of all men in His hands, may give your children the grace to repent and to lead pious lives; as I have elsewhere explained more in detail. Trustful and fervent prayer can work wonders with the infinitely good and faithful Lord. You will thus become parents of your children in a twofold sense; for you will not only have given them their natural lives, but you will also have brought forth their souls to life for God and Heaven.

Consolation for those who have weak or delicate children.

Although it is a hard thing for pious parents to have wicked children, yet there are some who attach little importance to the future life, and who think it a far greater trial to have weak and delicate, or deformed children. For instance, the children have distorted features; one is stupid or even silly; another is sickly and delicate; a third is blind, lame, or crippled. Such is the whole cause of the parents' sorrow and trouble: Oh, my poor son, they think, full of anxiety; oh, my unhappy daughter! What am I to do with them? How can I provide for them? What will become of them when I am gone? Is it not a great misfortune? Even if they were with God in Heaven, we should die happy! And thus they lament. But why are you so troubled, to no purpose, about the divine will? God, who has created your chil-

dren, knows why He made them deformed or sickly. Say with the Prophet David : "He made us, and not we ourselves."[1] We often do not know what we wish, or desire, or ask from God, nor what we complain of and grieve about. He is the Lord, who alone knows what is best for each one of us, in every circumstance. He is the Lord, whose providence arranges all things for the good of man. When you think of your children, remember what Christ said : "It is better for thee, having one eye, to enter into life," with one hand, or lame and crippled, with one foot, "than having two eyes, to be cast into hell's fire,"[2] with two hands, or two feet. And, therefore, He tells us to pluck out an eye, to cut off a hand or foot, if we are thereby led into sin. Remember that if your children were all beautiful, clever, or healthy, they might become worldly, as God has foreseen ; they might sink into all kinds of vice and sin and be lost forever. As it is, their natural defects keep them out of many occasions of evil, and they will one day rise again, free from every defect, to rejoice with God in Heaven. Could you desire anything better than this for your children? Therefore, let the Almighty dispose of them as He pleases. Thank Him, and be satisfied with your children such as He has given them to you.

They must love such children as much as the others.

Meanwhile, as far as bringing them up to virtue is concerned, you must be as careful of them as of your other children, whom you think possess better natural qualities. The former are made to the image of the Almighty God, just as well as the latter. If a precious treasure is confided to my care, I must guard it well, and not allow it to be stolen, whether the box which contains it is black or white, made of plain wood, or of gold and silver. For the box does not increase or lessen the value of the treasure it contains. Married Christians, the souls of your children are the precious treasures that the divine goodness has entrusted to your charge for a time. The body is only a box, or to speak better, a worthless sack, in which that royal treasure, the soul, lies concealed. What matters it, then, whether the sack is beautiful or ugly, crooked or straight ? In any case it contains a beautiful soul that is pleasing to God, and that, therefore, you also must love and esteem. And besides, if you look after your deformed or sickly children as you ought, and be satisfied with the decrees of providence, your temporal interests will not suffer, but will rather

[1] Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos.—Ps. xcix. 3.

[2] Bonum tibi est cum uno oculo in vitam intrare, quam duos oculos habentem mitti in gehennam ignis.—Matth. xviii. 9.

be advanced thereby, as many have already experienced. I myself have known parents whose grown-up son was blind, dumb, deaf, and lame, and at the same time silly, if not absolutely insane. Instead of complaining, as many parents would do in such a case, they used to say, in my hearing: Our son brings every blessing to our house. And when he died they wept bitterly. Now, said the sorrowing father, all the luck is gone from us! Such is the way in which the good Lord acts with us: He never sends us a cross without, at the same time, giving us consolation and blessing; although we sometimes do not know in what the blessing consists.

Those who through poverty cannot support their children.

One of the heaviest crosses for married people, at least, according to their own idea, is to have children, and not to have bread enough to give them, or to try to rear them according to their condition without having the means to do so. Certainly, poverty is hated by all. But it arises either from the fault of married people themselves, or from the arrangements of divine providence.

They must take the blame, if their poverty comes from their own fault.

It comes from their own fault, either because they marry without sufficient means, and know not how they are to earn anything to support themselves and those who depend on them, or because, although they know how to earn, they are too idle and too fond of their own ease to work. What else can be the result of that, but a house full of poor children. Father Faber relates that a young man once came to a well-known friend of his, to borrow money to get a table made. I have been married for some months, said the young man, and have not yet been able to buy a table, so that we have been obliged to have our meals at a bench. You unfortunate man, said the other to him, is it possible that you have not even a table? Why did you get married, then? Where will you get food to put on the table, and how will you be able to support your children hereafter? Such instances are only too common, to the great detriment of the whole community, in which mendicity is thus increased. Or, as also frequently happens, the married couple may have means enough to live comfortably, and to support their children decently and respectably, but through carelessness they allow their wealth gradually to slip through their fingers, and so reduce themselves to poverty in the long run. They spread their wings too far, they bend the bow until it breaks. They try to be like others in respect to food, clothing, and house-keeping, although their means do not allow it. They dress their children expensively, and let them go

about doing nothing, so that they appear to be richer than they really are, and at last they are forced to suffer the pinch of poverty, which they could have avoided by living in Christian humility and modesty, according to their means. How many cases of that kind there are in the world, and perhaps in our very midst! Go on with your luxury in dress and expensive living; you will find out your mistake in the end! I have never had the gift of prophecy, but in this matter I know that I will prove a true prophet, and that I am right in saying that your children, and your children's children will suffer want. These people and such as these may blame themselves for their poverty and the trials it entails, and they will certainly have to give a strict account to their Judge hereafter, for having thus wilfully reduced their children to poverty.

If poverty comes to them by misfortune, through divine decree, they must console themselves.

But if they repent, or if they and their children suffer want through the hidden decrees of the Almighty, oh, then, they have reason for patience and consolation, when they think that such is the will of God! Father, since such is Thy will, may that holy will be done![1] We and our children are not here that we may become rich, but that we may fulfil Thy most righteous will, oh, my God, and possess Thee forever in Heaven! To this end poverty will help us as well, nay, even much better than riches! Many, very many rich people are now in hell with the rich glutton, who, if they had been poor, or, at all events, not so rich on earth, would be now rejoicing in Heaven. Many, very many poor people, who now have to work hard for their daily bread, and who would have lost their souls if they had been rich, or had possessed more of the world's wealth, will be heirs of Heaven with the poor Lazarus. Cardinal Pallavicini had a beautiful idea when he compared riches to a shoe. A shoe, my dear brethren, to be well made, must fit the foot exactly: it must not be too wide nor too narrow. If it is too wide you are always in danger of stumbling and falling; if it is too narrow, you can certainly walk more safely, but it hurts your foot. The best and most comfortable shoe is that which is neither too large nor too small, and is just suited to the size of the foot. So it is also with riches and worldly goods: if they are too wide, that is to say, in superfluity, then there is great danger of falling into many sins, and perishing miserably. If they are too narrow, if you have not enough for your support, you feel the pinch of poverty. Therefore the Wise Man prayed to God: "Give me neither beggary nor riches:

[1] Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.—Matth. xi. 26.

give me only the necessaries of life."[1] He did not wish to have his shoe too wide nor too narrow, but so that it would fit his foot exactly.

Such poverty is good

Meanwhile, married Christians, if God wishes to make the shoe too small for you, what can you do? You must accept that small trial from His loving hand; it is better for your souls than if the shoe were too wide. With narrow shoes, because they hurt, we walk carefully; we go out only when and where it is necessary; we cannot venture to leap about too much with them, because our feet are too much confined, and we always try to avoid stony and dangerous roads. That is to say, owing to your poverty, you will be modest and humble, for it is, generally speaking, superfluous wealth that causes pride and vanity. You will learn to live quietly and economically, and to love labor and work, and in that way you will be free from many dangers and occasions of sin; for, generally speaking, superfluous wealth causes people to lead an idle life and, as a consequence of that, an unchristian life. You will learn in your poverty to raise your hearts to God and to heavenly riches, for it is mostly worldly wealth that turns the human heart away from God and heavenly things. You will encourage each other in the words of the elder Tobias to his son: Be of good heart, my son. "We lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things," in eternity, if we bear poverty in this short life with resignation, and "if we fear God and depart from all sin."[2] For the consolation of the poor, I shall enter more in detail on this subject on another occasion; I pass on now to the other trials, which one of the married couple causes the other, and I will show you how you are to console yourselves under them.

Second Part.

Comfort for married people when one of them is suffering from a tedious illness.

I will not speak now of the trouble and anxiety which married people wickedly cause each other, by unfaithfulness, aversion, hatred, avarice, extravagance, cruelty, and such like, by which discord is introduced into the married state; for I have already said enough on that head. I shall now consider only those natural frailties for which no one is to be blamed; such as a long and tedious illness, or even death itself. The first of these causes

[1] Mendicitatem et divitias ne dederis mihi: tribue tantum victui meo necessaria.—Prov. xxx. 8.

[2] Pauperem quidem vitam gerimus, sed multa bona habebimus, si timuerimus Deum, et recesserimus ab omni peccato.—Tob. iv. 23.

great anxiety to two hearts that really love each other, especially when the illness is of long duration. We can easily imagine how people feel in such circumstances : the sick person has pain and sorrow enough, while the other, who is in good health, is almost as badly off, either through pity, or on account of the labor of attending on the former. And what advice is to be given to them in such a case ? None, except that they should resign themselves humbly to the will of God ; for it is certain that health and sickness, life and death, come from the Lord, and sickness is a gift of God, as well as health. Trials of this kind are often useful, nay, even necessary for us, since thereby our eyes are opened, and we can see where we are here below, namely, in a vale of tears, where we can have no joy or consolation unmixed with trials and suffering. The poets of old tell us that Prometheus, when forming the first man, mixed up the clay that was to make his body, not with ordinary water, but with tears, to signify that man is placed in a world of sorrows. If married people, who truly love each other, were always in good health, they would often nearly lose every desire for the joys of Heaven, and would dread nothing more than death, which would separate them, and rob them of the paradise they think they have found on earth. Therefore, God often visits them, afflicts one of them with a tedious illness, and thus disturbs their joy, so that they may both learn that their true country is not here, but in eternity, and that they cannot reach it except by the rough road of trials and difficulties.

When one of them dies prematurely.

For the same reason God frequently dissolves the bond of marriage, and takes one of them away by a premature death. That is the hardest trial of all for married people who love each other. It pierces the heart of the survivor with a sorrow that can hardly be healed for the first half year. And truly, one must be made of marble or iron, not to grieve over the unexpected loss of a person in whom all one's love, happiness, and consolation have been centred, next after God. There is not even a savage beast but grieves when it is deprived of something that it has long been attached to. But let that be as it may, what is the use of so much weeping and sorrowing ? Its only effect is to make one pine away with melancholy, and ruin one's health. All our tears will not restore the dead to life, nor be of any help to one who has entered into eternity.

How they must console themselves.

Therefore, married Christians, the best thing for you to do in such a case, is to put away the sorrowful thoughts out of your

minds, and occupy yourselves with some lawful business. Think also for your consolation: It is done now, and I cannot undo it; such is the will of God; the Lord has given me my husband, or my wife, He has taken back His gift: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."[1] I knew very well, when I was getting married, that I was uniting myself to a mortal who could not escape death some time or other; why should I now grieve and sorrow so much for the death of that mortal, who has accomplished a journey that I, too, must end in the same manner. I am not astonished when I see that wax melts in the heat of the sun, that wood burns when it is thrown into the fire, that clothes are gnawed away by the moths, for I know that all these things occur according to natural laws. In the same way, I must look upon this death as a mere natural occurrence, since all men must die. How many great people are subject to death, although so many people depend on them, and they must be satisfied with the will of God; why should I not be so too? My husband, my wife, is, I hope, in Heaven; why should I be envious of that great good fortune, or try to trouble it by my sorrow? He, or she, who is gone before, will prepare the way for me, and will obtain powerful graces for me from God, that I may save my soul; besides, I can say that the love I formerly gloried in so much on earth, is changed into a better and purer one. The object of my affection sees, in the light of God's presence, all my sorrow and affliction, and, perfectly happy while I am weeping, prays that everything may help me to my eternal salvation. How do I know what misfortune would have happened if he, or she, whose loss I so bitterly deplore, had lived longer in this miserable world? A violent death would have caused me and my children much greater sorrow. A sudden and unprovided death, without confession or repentance, would surely lead to eternal misery, and the loss would be irreparable forever. But since he, or she, was well prepared and received the last Sacraments before death, why should I not be resigned to the will of God? Therefore, I will praise God for the mercy He has shown to the dear departed one, as well as to me. God could have easily prevented this death. He did not do so. He is my loving Father whom I adore daily. He knows me and my children. He knows our circumstances and the loss we have suffered by death. He has foreseen the sorrow and trouble I now have to bear; but He knows also the power of the graces that He intends bestowing on me, if I only resign myself humbly and contentedly to His Father-

[1] Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit.—Sit nomen Domini benedictum.—Job i, 21.

ly will. He knows the great merit I can gain by patience, the crown of glory He has in store for me in Heaven, and the temporal blessings He intends bestowing on me and my children, whom He can provide for far better than we could have done, with all our labor and trouble. Therefore, I will place no obstacle in the way of His bounteous providence by murmurs and complaints, nor will I hinder Him from bestowing on me and mine the blessings He has in reserve for us. For the future I will fix all my love in the God of infinite goodness, for before my heart was divided.

According to the example of all pious married people.

It was thus that Melania, the daughter of a Roman citizen, mitigated her grief after the premature death of her husband, and of two beloved sons. Such was her heroic resolution, as St. Jerome tells us in his letter to St. Paula: "Now, oh, Lord, I will be able to serve Thee with less hindrance, since Thou hast freed me from such a great burden."[1] In the same way, too, the holy queen, St. Elizabeth, consoled herself, after the death of the king, her husband, with the thought that she would have a better opportunity of devoting herself with all her heart to the love of God; and as Surius testifies in her life, she said, full of joy and consolation: "I would have given the whole world to preserve my husband's life; but since God has been pleased to take him from me, I would not give a single hair of my head to have him back again." All of you should learn from these Christian heroines to resign yourselves patiently and contentedly to the will of God, in such circumstances.

A good conscience is a consolation in all difficulties.

Finally, a general remedy for all trials, no matter where they come from, and a sure source of consolation, is the love of God and a good conscience. As the Holy Ghost Himself tells us in these words of the Wise Sirach: "Gather up thy heart in His holiness; and drive away sadness far from thee."[2] We know by experience that such is the case; for crosses and trials in this life are generally chastisements that the just God sends to pious Christians, as well as to the wicked, and indeed, He sends the former far more of them than the latter. But see which of the two is the more afflicted: a good, conscientious man, or a wicked and vicious one? Which of the two is the more easily consoled in similar trials: a pious, virtuous woman, or a vain, frivolous, and worldly-minded one? Which of the two will give way to noisy lamentations, to complaints and murmurs against God and Heaven, and to despair and melancholy? A

[1] Jam magis expedite tibi servitura sum Domine, quia tanto me onere liberasti.

[2] Congrega cor tuum in sanctitate ejus, et tristitiam longe repelle a te.—Eccl. xxx. 24.

good or a wicked Christian? There is no doubt that if we consult experience, we shall find that a slight annoyance, a trifling loss or misfortune, a thing of no account, so to speak, is enough to drive a wicked man to frenzy; while a pious Christian who loves God, can bear a far heavier cross much better, for although he feels it, yet the bitterness of his suffering, the heavy weight of his cross, will not press long upon him, before he has recourse to God for strength. A single confession or communion, a devout prayer, is enough to make him resigned to the will of God; and therefore, although his eyes are filled with tears, his heart is full of consolation and contentment.

Shown by an example.

A priest of our Society went once into a house to console a mother and her daughter who were suffering a very severe trial. He found them both seated in a room, bewailing their misfortune. He tried everything to console them and amongst other means, he reminded them of the sufferings of the crucified Jesus and of His sorrowful Mother, who, without any fault of their own, suffered far greater torments and trials through love of us. The daughter was still young, and had been lately married. She had been educated from her childhood in a convent, and had been brought up in the love and fear of God. The mother was a vain woman, who had learned but little of the maxims of the Gospel, and had hitherto lived according to the laws and usages of the world. Mark, my dear brethren, the difference between the two, and see what a different effect the priest's words had on them. The mother, with a frown on her face, said: Oh, Father, you may take away your crucifix, if you have nothing better to console us. It is a poor sort of consolation that one can get from it! It is good enough for monks and nuns in their cells; it is of no use to us who live in the world. She then turned her back on him, and began to cry and lament as before. The daughter, on the contrary, although she had to bear the weight of the trial, and the mother was grieving only on her account, recovered herself immediately, because she was devout and pious, and acting on the priest's advice, betook herself to prayer, whereupon she felt greatly consoled, became resigned to the will of God, and in a few days was quite peaceful and contented; while the mother continued to give way to grief and to reject all consolation, until, in a short time, she died. She was a martyr to sorrow without any merit, and perhaps went to the eternal torments of hell!

Conclusion and exhortation to the

Christian married people, and all who are here present, who are now and then tried in various ways, no matter what your

Afflicted to be resigned to God's will.

state of life may be, take to heart this advice which the Holy Ghost gives in the words quoted already: "Gather up thy heart in His holiness, and drive away sadness far from thee."[1] Be careful to have a good conscience, and to keep in the friendship of God always, and then, no matter how heavy your cross is, you will be relieved of half the burden; and then resign yourselves to the will of God, and think and say with the patient Job: "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil"[2] from a Fatherly hand with patience and resignation? Yes, my heavenly Father, let it be as it pleases Thee![3] I desire and wish for nothing else my whole life long but that Thy holy will be done in and by me and all belonging to me. If it is Thy pleasure for me to suffer much through my children, Thy holy will be done! If it is pleasing to Thee for me to have much trouble on account of my husband, or my wife, may Thy holy will be done! If it is pleasing to Thee for me to have trials and difficulties from other sources, Thy holy will be done! Do Thou only give me more patience, and do with me as Thou pleasest! I will try more earnestly to keep in Thy friendship, and if my sensitive nature forces the tears from my eyes, yet I will always say in my heart: "May the name of the Lord be blessed,"[4] now and forevermore. Amen.

THIRTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE PRAYER OF MARRIED PEOPLE IN THEIR TROUBLES.

Subject.

1st. Troubles teach us to pray. 2d. They teach us the best way of praying.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Petite et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.—John xvi. 24.

"Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

[1] Congrega cor tuum in sanctitate ejus; et tristitiam longe repelle a te.
[2] Si bona suscepimus de manu Domini, mala quare non suscipiamus?—Job ii. 10.
[3] Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te. [4] Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

Introduction.

Hear, Christian married people, and all of you who are now and then visited with crosses, trials, and difficulties, and rejoice! Why have I spent so much time hitherto in telling you how to console yourselves in trials? Hear what the best Consoler of all, Jesus Christ, says to you: "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."[1] It is the almighty and most faithful God who says this; consequently, the best and safest means against all difficulties, is prayer to God. When I think of that, I must say: Your trials are most useful to you, and most desirable. Because the Lord complains that we pray so little to Him, and ask so little from Him: "Hitherto you have not asked anything."[2] And so it appears that He sends new crosses sometimes, in order to force and compel you to ask consolation from Him in prayer. Such is the case, my dear brethren, and therefore, crosses and trials are good for us, because they teach us how to pray, as I shall prove now, for the greater consolation of the afflicted.

Plan of Discourse.

Troubles teach us to pray: that is a great benefit. The first part. Troubles teach us the best manner of praying: that is a still greater benefit. The second part. Therefore, pray in your troubles, and you may be certain of being consoled. The conclusion.

Do Thou, oh, Jesus, who hast said: "Ask and you shall receive," help us thereto by Thy grace, through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

The gift of prayer is a great benefit.

I know not if men could receive a greater benefit in this mortal life than the gift of prayer to the Lord their God. For, since the good of a thing is estimated partly by its necessity, in so far as we cannot do without it, and partly by its usefulness, in so far as it helps us to gain a great deal, what could be more necessary to us poor mortals, in the midst of the trials and difficulties of this life, which affect both soul and body, than prayer to God? For He has determined, generally speaking, to give not a single gift or grace, unless to those who ask Him for it; as I shall hereafter show more fully, when I come to speak of the necessity of prayer. What can be more useful and advantageous than prayer? For everything good that we can wish for and desire can be obtained only by prayer, nay, it must sometimes be sought for with importu-

[1] Petite, et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.
[2] Usque modo non petistis quidquam.

nity. God says to all men: "Ask, and you shall receive."[1] "Seek and you shall find."[2] Come on boldly, and seek what you want, and you will find it with Me. "Knock" at my door, "and it shall be opened unto you."[3] Mark this, my dear brethren: Just as a shop-keeper stands before his shop and invites customers to come and buy, exhibiting his wares, and praising them, so as to inspire every one with a desire of purchasing them, so does God act when He offers us all His gifts and graces, provided only we pray for and desire them. And He is a faithful God, who never can fail to fulfil His promises, and whose perfections compel Him to give us everything He has promised. Therefore, He must give His grace, the eternal joys of Heaven, nay, even Himself, to all who ask Him in the proper way; as I shall show more fully, when I come to speak of the efficacy of prayer. Hence I come to the conclusion that there is nothing more useful and more desirable for human beings, than that which forces and compels them to pray, and without which they would neglect such a great good.

To which men are driven by trials.

But, mark this! such is precisely the effect of the trials and difficulties that the all-ruling God sends us in different ways. We have daily experience of that. How do things go on in a town or community in a time of general peace? Certainly, if we were just and honest, we should thank the goodness and generosity of God for such a blessing. But, alas, the contrary is most frequently the case! With reason does the poet say: "Sacrifices are scarce in prosperous times."[4] In truth, it is so. If we have everything according to our wishes, then good-by to prayer; no one thinks of it! The majority of people forget their God; He is cheated of His due service; the Churches are never crowded; the altars are bare; there are few who raise up their eyes to Heaven, few who speak to the good God, few who think of appeasing His anger: "Sacrifices are scarce in prosperous times."

This is seen in public calamities.

But if the apparently prosperous wheel of fortune turns in another direction; if clouds begin to hide the sun; if the season turns out unfruitful, and brings on scarcity; if a general war disturbs the public tranquillity; if a pestilence hurries off numbers of young and old to the grave, oh, then there is an immediate change to be seen everywhere! The hitherto almost deserted Churches are again filled with people; the knee is bent humbly before the great God; the hands are stretched out to Heaven, or folded in prayer; great and small unite in crying out to God for

[1] Petite, et accipietis. [2] Quærite, et invenietis.
[3] Pulsate, et aperietur vobis.—Luke xi. 9. [4] Raræ fumant felicibus aræ.

help and mercy. So does the darkness of night compel us to light a candle; the bitter cold of winter drives us to the fire; a severe illness makes us speak kindly to the doctor; the trials and difficulties of life force us to seek help from God by prayer. It is a beautiful saying of St. John Chrysostom: "Prayer is the fruit and the reward of calamity."[1] And if calamity had no other effect but to teach us how to pray, we should on that account, alone, hold it in the highest esteem.

Just as was the case formerly with the Jews.

In former times the goodness of God had bestowed countless wonderful benefits on the Jewish people, but none of them was more profitable than the rod with which He sometimes chastised them. And why so? Because as long as things went well with them, they were rebellious and ungrateful; they forgot God. The Sacred Scripture says: they left God, their Maker,[2] and adored false gods. St. John Chrysostom says: "So does prosperity make people forget God."[3] And how must the ungrateful people be taught to return to the true God, and to adore Him? They must be forced by necessity:[4] "Their heart was humbled," says the Prophet David, alluding to their history: "they were weakened," with pestilence, war, and famine, "and there was none to help them," and so they changed very quickly: "Then they cried to the Lord in their affliction."[5] David says elsewhere: "When he slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and came to Him early in the morning,"[6] to adore Him, and ask His help.

Private calamities also compel us to pray. Proved from Holy Scripture.

An equally powerful teacher and master is calamity, not only in a community, but with each individual in particular. The Holy Scriptures are filled with examples that prove this. Jonas prayed, but when? He tell us himself: "I cried out of my affliction to the Lord,"[7] when I was cast into the sea, and swallowed by a monstrous fish; being miraculously preserved, I remembered my God, from whose face I had flown. I learned to pray and call upon the Lord in trials. Ezechias prayed with tearful eyes; but when? When he was suffering from a grievous illness, and was on the point of dying: "He turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord,"[8] "and Ezechias

[1] Oratio est merces calamitatum. [2] Dereliquit Deum factorem suum.—Deut. xxxii. 15.
[3] Adeo deliciæ solent ad numinis oblivionem adducere.
[4] Compelle intrare.—Luke xiv. 23.
[5] Humiliatum est cor eorum, infirmati sunt, nec fuit qui adjuvaret. Et clamaverunt ad Dominum, cum tribularentur.—Ps. cvi. 12, 13.
[6] Cum occideret eos, quærebant eum et revertebantur, et diluculo veniebant ad eum.—Ps. lxxvii. 34.
[7] Clamavi de tribulatione mea ad Dominum.—Jon. ii. 3.
[8] Convertit faciem suam ad parietem et oravit Dominum.—IV. Kings xx. 2.

wept with much weeping,"[1] as we read in the 20th chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings. Mark this, again says St. John Chrysostom: when Ezechias was well and prosperous, "his heart became filled with pride:"[2] but when he was stricken down by sickness, he began to pray as he never did before. Samson prayed, but it was when the Philistines put out his eyes and imprisoned him. The three Hebrew children prayed in the fiery furnace. Daniel, though he often prayed at other times, was especially devout in the lions' den. Jacob prayed the whole night through when he was expecting to be attacked by his brother Esau. I hear the disciples of Jesus Christ crying out: "Lord, save us, we perish,"[3] but when? When their boat was on the point of being overwhelmed by the storm; whereas, before the danger threatened them, they allowed their Master to sleep, and were talking about other things. Peter prayed alone before all the disciples; he cried out to Christ: "Lord, save me!"[4] When did he say that? "When he was commencing to sink beneath the water,"[5] then it was that he cried out, Lord,[6] now is the time to help me! The Chananæan woman prayed, because her daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. The Centurion in the Gospel prayed, because his servant was stricken with the palsy. The blind man prayed by the wayside, because he wished to have his sight restored to him. The ruler of the synagogue prayed, because his daughter was dead. The ruler of Capharnaum prayed, when his son was in danger of death. Martha and Magdalen prayed when their brother Lazarus lay at the point of death, etc. So true is it that: "Prayer is the fruit and the reward of calamity."[7]

For this reason God sends us trials.

For, God acts with us as the mother does with her child. If she sees that the child is fond of running about and leaving her, thus putting itself in danger of an accident, and that it will not come when called, what does she do? She tells one of the servants to disguise himself, and to go and frighten the child, so that the latter may at once run to its mother for protection, and may not be so ready to leave her in future. In the same way our heavenly Father acts when He wishes to keep His children close to Himself; as St. John Chrysostom says: "He allows trials to come upon us, that we may have recourse to Him more frequently by prayer."[8]

Especially to married

If this means is necessary for any state of life, it certainly is

[1] Flevitque Ezechias fletu magno.—IV. Kings xx. 3. [2] In altum cor ejus erectum est
[3] Domine, salva nos, perimus. [4] Domine, salvum me fac.
[5] Cum cœpisset mergi. [6] Domine! [7] Oratio est merces calamitatum.
[8] Tribulationes fieri permittit, ut ad ipsum frequentius confugiamus.

for the married state ; for since, on the one hand, married people are occupied the whole day with domestic cares and temporal concerns, so that they are hindered from preserving a constant union with God ; and on the other hand, the pleasures of the world and the enjoyment of creatures are apt to turn away the heart from God and heavenly things, it is already evident that if everything went according to their wishes, and if they had no trials to bear, they would hardly think seriously and earnestly of God once in the day, nor would they see any necessity of praying to Him for anything ; but they would turn away from Him like little children, and abandon Him. And then the Almighty says: If you will not remain with Me, and pray to Me otherwise, I will teach you how to do it. He then immediately commands His servants, that is, His creatures, to take away some of their wealth from those people ; to bring sickness on their beloved son ; to cause the husband or wife a mortal illness ; to trouble the parents by the wilfulness and obstinacy of the children; to make one of the married couple a source of anxiety and grief to the other. And to what purpose ? That they may learn to have recourse to Him, to stretch out their hands to Him, and implore His help. In that way they learn to pray; otherwise, they would not have thought of it.

people, that they may learn to pray.

And what is still better, not only will they be driven to have recourse to God by prayer, but also, generally speaking, the words of the Gospel with regard to the ruler will be verified with regard to them, and to their household : "Himself believed, and his whole house."[1] In such trials not only do the married couple themselves learn to pray, but all the children, servants, and friends must help them therein and ask God to assist them, because the trouble affects the whole family. Nor is this all ; they get others to pray also, they have Masses said, and they recommend themselves in public devotions to the prayers of the whole congregation. Thus God is praised by the united prayers of many persons ; and prayer of that kind is sure to ascend to Heaven, according to the infallible promise of Jesus Christ : "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."[2] "Whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father."[3]

And their whole household as well.

You must see now and acknowledge, Christian married people, what a great and useful blessing trials and crosses bring into your

Therefore trials are good for them.

[1] Credidit ipse et domus ejus tota.—John iv. 53.

[2] Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregari in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum.—Matth. xviii. 20.

[3] Quæcunque petierint, fiet illis a Patre meo.—Ibid. 19.

house. They teach you to pray to God, and that is already a great advantage; but what is better still, they also teach you how to pray in the best manner, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Prayer must be humble.

There is praying and praying. The Pharisee prayed in the Temple before the altar; the publican prayed at the same time, in the same temple, behind the door. The latter went home justified after his prayer; but not the former. Many Christians pray, nowadays, to whom the words of the Apostle St. James might be applied: "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss."[1] So that the first requisite for prayer, to be good and pleasing to God, is humility, as I shall prove hereafter: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles."[2] Who is that poor man, asks St. Augustine; is it only he who is poor in earthly goods? Oh, if that were the case, woe to you, rich and wealthy, for your prayers would do you little good! No; the rich are not excluded, if they pray like the poor; that is to say, humbly acknowledging their wants and miseries, and confessing, with full submission to the divine Majesty of God, that they require His help and assistance in everything, and that He alone can free them from their evils. How do poor mendicants act in order to arouse the rich man's pity, and to induce him to give them an alms? If they have a sum of money that they succeeded in scraping together elsewhere, do they show it to him? By no means, for if they did, he would give them nothing. No; they conceal it as well as they can, and let him see only a few pence in their hands; they pretend to be much poorer than they really are; they show their ragged clothes and the sores that appear through their torn garments; they point to their faces emaciated by hunger, and they openly declare and acknowledge everything that could excite pity and compassion. In the same humble condition should we appear before the great God, to ask His help and mercy by prayer. We must declare to Him our necessities, wants, and frailties, both of soul and body; we must tell Him that we can do nothing and that we have none to help us, and appeal to His goodness and mercy. This is the prayer of which God says by the Prophet Ezechiel: "The prayer of Him that hum-

[1] Petitis, et non accipitis; eo quod male petatis.—James iv. 3.

[2] Iste pauper clamavit, et Dominus exaudivit eum, et de omnibus tribulationibus ejus salvavit eum.—Ps. xxxiii. 7.

bleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and the Lord will not be slack."[1]

Trials force us to this.

But when do we feel the greatest impulse to pray? Is it in the time of prosperity? By no means. When everything goes according to our wishes, although we should acknowledge that we have received everything from the goodness of God, who is there who confesses humbly, before the throne of God, wants and miseries that he does not feel? But when the shoe pinches and hurts, when the hand of the Lord wields the rod, when a severe trial or a heavy cross comes near us, or actually upon us, that is the time to humble ourselves. We do not require to borrow words from prayer books then to express the misery that we feel. How easy it is for us to humble ourselves in such circumstances before the Lord our God! How deep and sincere are the sighs and groans with which we show Him the ulcers that afflict us, and cry to Him for mercy!

The Chananæan woman proves this.

See with what great humility the Chananæan woman prayed to Christ to free her daughter from the evil spirit, and herself from her affliction. She prostrates herself before Him on the ground, and cries out: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."[2] Christ pretended not to hear her, and answered not a word.[3] But she did not cease to urge her humble petition, and the disciples besought Him for her: "Send her away,"[4] do as she asks. And the good and gentle Saviour answered: No; "it is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs."[5] So that He appears to treat her as a dog! And what does she answer? "Yea, Lord," she says with the greatest humility; "for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters."[6] Allow something to fall from thy table for me also, a poor hungry whelp, and I will be content therewith. My dear brethren, it must not have been the first time that that woman was called by such an opprobrious name, since she acted so well on this occasion! She does not consider herself a bit better than a poor little dog. What impelled her to pray so humbly? The affliction she was suffering on account of her daughter's unhappy state; and as the

[1] Oratis humiliantis se nubes penetrabit, et Dominus non elongabit.—Eccl. xxxv. 21, 22.
[2] Miserere mei, Domine, Fili David: filia mea mala a dæmonio vexatur.—Matth. xv. 22.
[3] Qui non respondit ei verbum.—Ibid. 23.
[4] Dimitte eam.—Ibid.
[5] Non est bonum sumere panem filiorum, et mittere canibus.—Ibid. 26.
[6] Etiam, Domine: nam et catelli edunt de micis, quæ cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum.—Ibid. 27.

result of her prayer, she obtained mercy from our Lord; for He said to her: "Be it done to thee as thou wilt."[1]

Shown by an example.

This incident of the Gospel reminds me of another example, which occurred during the Pontificate of Clement V. This Pontiff was so embittered against the Venetians, on account of their misdeeds, that he inflicted all kinds of spiritual and temporal punishments on them, and could not be appeased in any way. Amongst the ambassadors whom the Venetians sent to Rome to pacify the Pope, there was one Francis Dandolo, by name. When this latter heard that Clement was inexorable, he placed a heavy chain round his neck, and while the Pope was at table, he came in on his hands and knees, and crawled in that humble position, like a four-footed beast, up to the table, as if to say: Jesus Christ had mercy on the Chananæan woman, because she asked for the crumbs like a little dog; see, oh, Vicar of Jesus Christ, I lie under your table like a dog and await your grace and mercy! Clement was quite confused at this proceeding. He told the prostrate ambassador to rise up and take off the chain, forgave the Venetians the injuries they had done him, and received them again into his friendship. You may learn from that how powerful humble prayer is with God, and how it can obtain anything, even from men; but see, too, how difficulties and trials teach men how to pray humbly.

Prayer must be fervent.

Another necessary quality for prayer to be efficacious is fervor and earnestness. The Prophet David says of himself: "I cried with my whole heart: Hear me, oh, Lord!"[2] What good is it to speak with the lips, if the heart is dumb? What good is it to play with the fingers on the keys of an organ, if there is no one to blow the bellows? The keys will give forth no music, nor will the prayer of the lips merely have any efficacy. A single Our Father, prayed fervently and earnestly, is worth more, in the sight of God, than a dozen rosaries, or any amount of them said without fervor and attention. St. Bernard had a wonderful vision once, as he was singing the Psalms in choir with his brethren: He saw an angel standing by each monk, with a book and a pen in his hand, writing down the words of the Psalms. The Saint was astonished at the difference of the letters in this book. Some of these were written in pure gold, to signify the inward and outward attention with which some of the brethren sang the praises of God; others were written in silver, to denote the pure in-

[1] Fiat tibi, sicut vis.—Matth. xv. 28.

[2] Clamavi in toto corde meo: Exaudi me, Domine!—Ps. cxviii. 145.

tention they had; others again were written in black ink, to signify that the prayer was said in the ordinary way; others were written in water, which disappeared immediately, and these denoted that the prayer was tepid, devotionless, and without fervor; and finally, the words that some of the brethren uttered were not written down at all, but in place of them the following: "These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."[1] Thus the angel testified his dissatisfaction at voluntarily distracted prayer.

Which it rarely is in time of prosperity.

Oh, prayer of Christians, of what kind art thou, especially in time of prosperity, when no necessity impels us to have recourse to God? Holy angels, show us your book for once, that we may see in what colors you have written down that prayer! I fear there are many whose prayers are written in black letters; more still whose prayers are written in water, and with the greater number, I fear, the pen will not be once laid to the paper! People go every day to Church and hear Mass. That is a good deal, and they who do so may be reckoned as pious Christians. When benediction is given, or there is an indulgence to be gained, or there is a procession taking place, people generally are present. That part of the prayer book, in which the most pleasing and touching instances of the perfect love of God are given, is read, and people think that the longer time they spend in such devotion, the more devout are they during the day. They imagine all sorts of wonderful things about the great service they have shown to God, and they think something very good and holy has been done by them. Ah, that is not what devotion consists in: true prayer does not consist in saying so many prayers; for what is the general character of them? If they were all counted up together, many of them would be represented by a mere cipher. There is more idleness than devotion in such prayers. There is such curiosity of the eyes, and such distraction of the mind, that the devil laughs at those prayers; as those two experienced, of whom Jordanus writes that they were saying the office together, but so sleepily and distractedly that the evil spirit caused a fearful stench to arise at the end of the prayer, and said to them, laughing: "Such a prayer deserves this kind of incense."[2] Many read all sorts of things in their books, and do not understand what they are reading, what they desire, or what they are asking for; they are not at all in earnest about receiving from God what

[1] Populus hic labiis me honorat, cor autum eorum longe est a me.—Matth. xv. 8.
[2] Ad talem orationem, tale debetur incensum.

they ask for in that way. The Our Father is certainly said hundreds and thousands of times, and many who say it so often do not once earnestly desire that a single petition contained in it be fulfilled; and meanwhile, a soul overwhelmed with affliction at some heavy cross, cries out only once to Heaven: Lord, grant me patience; Lord, help me in my necessity; or, Lord, Thy will be done! This one sigh is more to the glory of God, and to the advantage of the soul, than all the long, unfervent, and distracted prayers that are said in time of prosperity.

Trials teach us how to pray with fervor.

Such is the case, my dear brethren. The approach, or the actual arrival of misfortune is, so to speak, the bellows that makes the organ sound; it fills the heart with the proper zeal and fervor in prayer. If a beam of wood falls upon a man and crushes him, he does not want a prayer book then, as I imagine; like a hungry beggar, he will easily find a few, earnest words, coming straight from the heart, to make known his difficulty to God. In prosperity it is the book, so to say, that speaks; in adversity, when we ask for help or relief, it is our will. Formerly it was merely the lips that moved in prayer, now it is the heart. The eyes do not wander about, the whole being is absorbed in prayer, through the intense desire of being heard. The cry, then, is, with David: "I cried with my whole heart: Hear me, oh, Lord."[1]

Shown by an example from the Sacred Scripture.

Her sterility taught Anna, the mother of Samuel, to pray with such fervor. The Sacred Scripture says of her, in the first chapter of the First Book of Kings: "As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears. And it came to pass, as she multiplied prayers before the Lord, etc."[2] Here, the holy Fathers ask, what is the meaning of multiplying prayers, since Anna in a few words asked of God to give her a son. Yes, answers St. John Chrysostom, her prayer was manifold, although her words were few, on account of the inward zeal and earnest desire with which she poured forth her heart before the Lord; for she thus prayed more with the heart than with the lips, according to what is said of her further on: "Now Anna spoke in her heart, and only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard at all."[3] With the same zeal Sara learned to pray, after her seven husbands had been killed by the devil, one after the other, on the first night of the marriage feast, and she had thus come to be

[1] Clamavi in toto corde meo: Exaudi me, Domine!

[2] Cum esset Anna amaro animo, oravit ad Dominum, flens largiter. Factum est autem, cum illa multiplicaret preces coram Domino, etc.—I. Kings i. 10, 12.

[3] Porro Anna loquebatur in corde suo, tantumque labia illius movebantur, et vox penitus non audiebatur.—Ibid. 13.

looked upon as the murderess of her husbands. In this trial, says the Sacred Text, "she went into an upper chamber of her house; and for three days and three nights did neither eat nor drink; but continuing in prayer, with tears besought God that He would deliver her from this reproach."[1] Such also is the testimony of King David, speaking of himself: "Instead of making me a return of love, they detracted me,"[2] and repaid me evil for good. What didst thou do then, oh, unhappy king? He says: "But I gave myself to prayer."[3] Cajetanus reads: "But I became a prayer."[4]

We must, then, thank God for trials as for a great benefit.

Oh, God of infinite wisdom, how canst Thou draw such sweetness from such apparent bitterness? What a great good Thou effectest for us with the very thing that we look upon as a great evil, when Thou visitest and seemest to punish us with trials? If crosses and afflictions brought us no other advantage nor merit, than to force us to pray, and to pray in the best possible manner, that ought to be enough to make us readily accept the cross from Thy hands, and to thank Thee for it! Certainly, as St. John Chrysostom says: "Are we suffering from poverty? Then let us give thanks to God!"[5] Are we persecuted by men? let us give thanks to God! In weakness and illness, let us give thanks.[6] In troubles and desolation, let us give thanks! In all difficulties that occur, let us give thanks! "For this serves to unite us with God;"[7] since we learn thereby to lift up our hearts to God, and to speak to Him in humble, fervent prayer.

Conclusion and exhortation to prayer in incidental trials.

Pray, then, Christian married people, and all of you; such is my conclusion, in the words of the holy Apostle St. James: "Is any of you sad? let him pray."[8] Pray with fervor and humility, as often as difficulties in your state of life cause you sorrow and suffering. Do not say, as people often do: I am so troubled and annoyed at home, that I can do no good; I cannot say a single Our Father devoutly, and it is that which causes me the greatest uneasiness. What do you mean by saying that you cannot pray? If it were possible to pray only in the Church, where you can read as much as you like out of your prayer book, quietly and devoutly, then I should acknowledge that crosses and trials would prevent rather than encourage devotion. But, as I have told you

[1] Perrexit in superius cubiculum domus suæ, et tribus diebus et tribus noctibus non manducavit, neque bibit, sed in oratione persistens; cum lacrimis deprecabatur Deum, ut ab isto improperio liberaret eam.—Tob. iii. 10, 11.

[2] Pro eo ut me diligerent, detrahebant mihi.—Ps. cviii. 4.

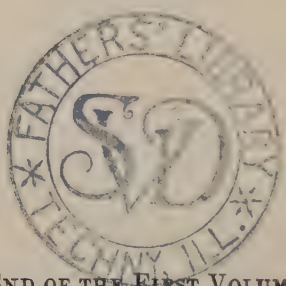
[3] Ego autem orabam. [4] Ego autem oratio. [5] In paupertate sumus? Gratias agamus.

[6] Gratias agamus. [7] Hoc enim nos fecit, proximos esse Deo.

[8] Tristatur aliquis vestrum? oret.—James. v. 13.

often enough before, real prayer does not consist in that. If you only think of God in your troubles, humbly acknowledge that your crosses come from His hand; if you only cry out from the bottom of your heart: Lord, have mercy on me; Lord, give me patience, etc., you will have prayed very well, indeed. It is easy for you to do that, no matter how troubled you are, and you really often do it, too. Cry out to Heaven frequently in that way, and you may be assured that you will not have long to wait for help, or at least for consolation from God, who tells us that He is our loving Father, and that His promises cannot deceive us: "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full!"[1] Yes, in future, my only refuge, my sole consolation will be sought in humble prayer to my heavenly Father: "I shall cry out and Thou wilt hear me!"[2] Thou wilt hear me, although Thou seemest to disregard my prayer. Thou wilt hear me, although I may not notice that my burden is lightened. One consolation, at all events, I shall have after prayer, and that is that I shall know Thy holy will, according to which it is decreed that I should suffer, so that Thou mayest prepare an eternal reward for me in return for the short sufferings of this life. Amen.

[1] Petite et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum. [2] Clamabo, et tu exaudies.



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